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THE

WESTERN MERCHANT.

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THE

WESTERN MERCHANT.

A NARRATIVE.

CONTAINING USEFUL INSTRUCTION FOR THE WESTERN MAN OF BUSINESS WHO MAKES HIS PURCHASES IN THE EAST;

ALSO,

INFORMATION FOR THE EASTERN MAN WHOSE CUSTOMERS ARE IN THE WEST:

LIKEWISE,

HINTS FOR THOSE WHO DESIGN EMIGRATING TO THE WEST.

DEDUCED FROM ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.

BY

LUKE SHORTFIELD.

PHILADELPHIA:
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PREFACE.

The merchants of the West, and particularly of the Far West, constitute a distinct class of society. This class is not only important from its numbers, but powerful and influential from its intelligence, enterprise, and wealth. Wherever the surges of "manifest destiny" scatter the seeds of civilization—whether it be in the solemn shade and solitude of the dark forests bordering the "Mad Missouri," or on the interminable prairies beyond the woods—the merchant or trader is always found in their midst, taking root among them, "growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength." He is a general *locum tenens*, the agent of everybody, and familiar with every transaction in his neighborhood. He is a counselor without license, and yet invariably consulted, not only in matters of business, but in domestic affairs. Parents ask his opinion before giving their consent to their daughters' marriages; and he is always invited to the weddings. He furnishes the nuptial garments for both bride and groom, and his taste is both consulted and adopted. Every item of news, not only local, but from a distance,—as he is frequently the post-master, and the only subscriber to the newspapers,—has general dissemination from his establishment, as from a common centre; and thither all resort, at least once a week, both for goods and for intelligence. Of course the *merchant is indefatigable* in his efforts to keep up and in-

crease the attractions of his location, and is always, when affording pleasure to the "greatest number," the most pleased himself; for each and all are pretty certain to deposit with him, sooner or later, all their "loose change."

Thus it is that western merchants become important personages in their immediate circles; and as the circles of these indispensable individuals embrace every populated league in the West, it is obvious that they must form a class of paramount importance in all the new states and territories. Candidates for the state legislature, for Congress, for Governor, bestow upon them their most gracious smiles; for they are supposed, and very truly, to possess considerable influence over the minds of their customers. So also with the lawyer and the doctor; for they perceive clearly that the shortest and surest road to popularity and employment, is by means of the effectual influence of him who furnishes every description of merchandize which cannot be produced or manufactured in the neighborhood, and who is the ultimate recipient of all the money not paid in at the Land office.

There is a charm in the life of the western merchant, notwithstanding his privations and perils, which has never yet been appreciated by the people dwelling east of the Appalachian mountains. To the young adventurer, it is not the enviable social position of the merchant in his locality, which alone constitutes his happiness: this, it is true, should the profits of his business be equal to his expectations, and yield an adequate recompense for his exertions, might still induce him to embark in the enterprise, and prosecute it to a successful termination. But when it is taken into consideration that, upon an average, one-fourth of his life is spent in traveling to and from the east, and that it is interspersed with novel incidents and agreeable adven-

tures,—similar in many respects to those of the pilgrim merchants we read of in entertaining tales, on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, journeying to and from Bagdad, or Nineveh, or Babylon,—no one can fail to draw the contrast between such a life and that of the unvaried routine of the city counting-room, which but too seldom affords its pale and attenuated occupant the time and opportunity to lave his wearied limbs in the surf at the Capes.

But we have, perhaps, said enough in the way of introduction. The object of this book is merely to direct attention to a class of individuals, of whose pursuits and peculiarities it is the author's purpose to attempt a brief description. If his narrative—which will have more of truth than fiction in it—shall simply suffice to entertain the reader, in place of one of the many vicious productions now daily hawked about the streets, he will not be altogether disappointed in his object; for he will have the satisfaction of not having contributed to corrupt, if he shall not have succeeded in aiding to improve, the public taste.

THE AUTHOR.

THE

WESTERN MERCHANT.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born in one of the eastern cities, and was the sixth of eleven children, of poor parents. When I was about six years of age, my family emigrated to Kentucky, then considered the "far west." At the end of six years, my father failed in business; and as he was now entirely too poor to provide for his large family, those that were deemed old enough sought employment to support themselves. Nor were they wholly unprepared for the exigency; for our honored parent, in more propitious times, had placed the proper estimate upon the importance of education, and from the time we were old enough to go to school, until the loss of his fortune, (and every dollar was honorably offered up to his creditors,) we had excellent preceptors. Being unluckily the sixth child, I was not so far advanced in the books as my seniors, when the disaster alluded to befell us—but as I had the advantage of my five juniors, there was no just cause of complaint. I had the rudiments of a good English education, and an insatiable passion for books, which they deemed quite sufficient for the very

humble part it seemed I was destined to play in the great drama of life.

Two of my sisters that were older than myself, were married about the time of our misfortunes; and soon after, three of my brothers (all my seniors) left home to seek their fortunes. My father then leased a farm of moderate dimensions, and made no scruple to toil himself, in quest of an honest livelihood. His creditors, convinced of his unimpeachable integrity, were indulgent, and suffered him to retain a male and female servant, in the hope that he would at no distant day be enabled to liquidate the balance of their claims, without being under the necessity of subjecting him to total destitution. My father, the colored boy, and myself (I being now some twelve years of age), cultivated the fields, while my mother superintended the garden, the raising of poultry, and all the other matters pertaining to the house and its immediate vicinity.

During the first year all was novelty and happiness. Farmer Shortfield (the name of my honored father), was distinguished in the neighborhood for his theoretical knowledge of agriculture, (which is so seldom made available in practice,) and for his excessive delight in rural pursuits. For my part, I must have the candor to confess, that a few months sufficed to cool my zeal, and to dampen my ardor in the use of the hoe and the plough. But I never grew weary of my country abode—it was a mere repugnance to labor. No one ever found keener enjoyment in the sight of green fields, ripening fruit, wild flowers and clear running streams, than myself. Each spreading tree was to me a canopy in Eden; and I was too often surprised by my indignant father reposing under them, musing over the pages of some entertaining book, while the old mare at the plough was playing havoc with the corn. "What in the

world are you doing there, Luke?" was the exclamation of my father, which often saluted my astonished ears while absorbed in such visions of enchantment. And the exclamation was frequently, and never amiss, succeeded by the shrill whistle of the birch across my shoulders. My father was not severe in his chastisements, only being impelled by a sense of duty; and I have more than once seen his assumed austerity completely overthrown by my ludicrous expressions of astonishment, on being so suddenly subjected to the lash in the midst of my empyreal fancies. On such occasions, I have seen him turn his face away to hide a smile.

Matters went on thus for several years, without any incidents worthy of narration. My repugnance to useful labor never diminished, although I never hesitated to exert myself in the way of sport. I had a fondness for angling and shooting, and would walk or wade from morning till night in pursuit of such pleasures as these sports would afford. I preferred to pursue them alone, so that my solitary meditations should not be subjected to interruption. And I may say that these tastes and habits of my boyhood have remained unchanged throughout my eventful life.

But I must hasten through the intervening space to the time when I became a western merchant. The experiment in agriculture did not prove successful. I was not destined to be a farmer. It was proposed that I should learn a trade. I consented to be a printer, and my father made, or was about making, application to have me bound to Mr. Francis P. Blair, who published a paper in Frankfort, when a letter was received from a lawyer, who was the clerk of the court of a neighboring county, and who had been informed (by whom I never knew) of my passion for reading, proposing that I should become a deputy in his office.

For my services, he agreed to board and clothe me; besides, I was to have the use of his excellent library, and the benefit of his instruction in the study of the law. Being left free to choose which pursuit I would follow, my inclination jumped with the last proposition, and so I embraced it.

I remember it as yesterday. After receiving the admonitions and blessings of my parents, I resolutely set out alone, and on foot, to traverse the country some thirty miles, in a direction I had never traveled before. I had a couple of biscuits in my pocket, and two or three shirts in a cotton handkerchief. I had not more than one dollar in money. But I was confident of a bright future. I had read of many poor boys who, by dint of their own exertions, achieved wealth and distinction; and as my father had convinced me that my future welfare depended altogether upon the success of my own efforts, I had resolved to struggle manfully for myself. When I had gone about two miles, and had ceased to meet with any one I knew, or who knew me, as a matter both of economy and convenience, I transferred my shoes from my feet to the stick upon my shoulder; and dismissing every thought of my humble condition from my mind, resumed my journey with unwonted animation and cheerfulness. It was a lovely morning in June. The sky was bright—yea, brighter, and the air more exhilarating, than I have since known them to be in the boasted climes of the European continent. Such, at least, has been my experience. The birds sang merrily in every hedge, and on every tree; and the bright rays of the sun streaming down through the interstices of the over-hanging sugar maples, were filled with golden insects. Never shall—never can—that day of my most utter destitution be banished from my *mind.* It was the happiest day of my life. For no sooner *had my sad* thoughts at parting passed away, than they

were succeeded by a train of bright fancies, which completely bereft me of all consciousness of my really pitiful and forlorn condition. As if by the influence of some potent spell, I saw myself grown to man's estate. I was rich, or at least had sufficient wealth to command every luxury I desired. I was successful as a pleader and orator. I was married to the being of my choice, (and in reality, I had at that early age chosen my bride, although she was my senior, and had never received the slightest intimation of my intentions,) and finally, pictured myself returning in my own coach to my delighted parents, and receiving the congratulations of all my kindred and friends. Such is a mere outline of the wild, extravagant conceit of my boyish imagination. The details of that stupendous fancy-piece occupied my mind the whole day, and my steps never grew weary. I have here dwelt upon that day-dream perhaps too long, because it is my habit often to revert to it. It was to some extent a true vision. Many of the ideal enjoyments then revealed to me, subsequently became reality. But there were no reverses, none of the stings of disappointment, shame and misery, in that bright picture, which were encountered in after life. Yet had I never departed from the path which the pious care of my parents had pointed out for me to pursue; had I never for a moment been tempted by the alluring and delusive blandishments of the Evil One, to do an act incompatible with the precepts of morality and religion; or at any time omitted to do that which I should have done—although my transgressions have not been more numerous, or more flagrant, perhaps, than those with which a majority of mankind may be justly reproached—it is my deliberate conviction that every desirable particular of my prophetic vision would have been *fully realized*. And I trust the young reader,

particularly, who may be cast upon the world without fortune, will derive profit from the lesson of my experience.

I arrived at the place of destination about sunset, and after a refreshing sleep, rose the next morning full of vigor and hope. I was easily instructed in my duties, and soon installed in the office. I became an efficient deputy to my employer or patron, in an unusually short space of time—and before many months had passed, was able to discharge all the duties of my principal, when business required his presence elsewhere. The duties were not onerous. They consisted principally in the recording of deeds and wills; and as I was expeditious with my pen, I had about two-thirds of my time to devote to reading. And here I would warn the young reader against an error I fell into. I read too rapidly and too much, without sufficient meditation, or exercise. I was more intent upon gleaning new ideas and new incidents, by running in rapid succession through the volumes before me, than judiciously digesting and thoroughly comprehending what I had already perused. This was a great defect in my early reading, which I have had reason to deplore ever since. And my taste (all unguided as it was) gave a decided preference to historical and miscellaneous works, instead of the law books. In less than two years I had galloped through the history of Greece, of Rome, of England, (Hume and Smollett's large volumes,) of the United States, and several hundred volumes of romances, poetry, &c.; and when I had accomplished all this, I had but a very imperfect and confused recollection of the contents of any of them, except the latter. And during all this time, I had not gone through the four volumes (the old edition) of Blackstone! But now, as I had read everything else in the library, I was in a manner forced to go through with my legal studies. In

vain I essayed to correct the error of hasty and superficial study. The habit was fixed upon me, never to be entirely removed. I made an abstract of Blackstone, and all the other books put into the hands (at that time) of the law student. I had all the principles and points, upon which the student was usually examined, committed to memory, and could repeat them verbatim, like a parrot, and understood them about as well. However, my preceptor examined me, and pronounced me capable of answering all the questions likely to be propounded by the judges. I had studied as long, and probably nearly as well, as most of the young lawyers of that day were in the habit of doing. But then there was one obstacle in my way which I had not hitherto thought of, and no one, until then, had apprised me of it. I could not practice in any of the courts until I was twenty-one years of age; and, as I lacked several years of the prescribed figure, and was becoming very impatient to be doing something more than merely earning my victuals and clothes, I wrote a letter to my brother Joseph, whose lot had cast him into the then wilderness of Missouri, and who was now getting a very good salary in a store, in the main village on the river, stating the particulars of my condition, and my anxiety to do something for myself, and for the benefit of our aged and indigent parents.

In due course of mail, (which was more tedious then than now,) my brother Joseph's answer came to hand. He advised me by all means to join him in Missouri, and stated that his generous employer had been so well pleased with his conduct, that he designed sending him, with a branch of his establishment, to a new town about to be erected farther up the river, and for his services was to give him *one-half of the* profits. He said he would need

a clerk; and that I, no doubt, would answer his purpose. He enclosed me fifty dollars to defray my expenses thither, which were to be repaid out of my salary. My salary was to be one hundred and twenty dollars the first year, besides my board—to be increased the next; and he had no doubt I would, in the course of a very few years, obtain an interest in some one of the numerous establishments then springing up in all directions. My mind was made up to go to this new El Dorado, provided my parents consented. I consulted my preceptor, who neither advised me to go nor persuaded me to stay; he was a conscientious and upright man; he acknowledged his inability to decide which would be the best course for me to pursue; and so he referred me to the counsel of my parents.

An unpleasant occurrence in the office about this time, confirmed my desire to abandon my official station of deputy clerk, and was well nigh involving my principal in difficulty. It was the law (and I believe it is so still), that every one entering into the holy state of matrimony, should first procure a written license from the county court clerk's office. It sometimes happened that the parties applying were strangers to the clerk or his deputy, and not unfrequently they were inhabitants of some other county. If either of the parties were under twenty-one years of age, it was necessary to have the consent of the parent or guardian, and if the clerk issued his license without this requisition having been complied with, he was liable to a heavy penalty. On one or two occasions I had detected and defeated fraudulent attempts to procure licenses. They had attempted to palm off on me counterfeit parents and guardians, without success; and as I had been complimented for my sagacity, I felt a little proud of my acute discrimination in such delicate cases. One day, however, I met

with more than my match, in a pretty, sprightly girl of sixteen. She was one of a party of four or five males and females from a neighboring county, who entered my office early one morning in November. She was the first to speak, and as I remember the dialogue distinctly, I will repeat it verbatim.

Miss H. Well, Mr. Shortfield, I suppose you know what we are after?

Mr. S. A license, of course; but you can't be accommodated for four or five years to come.

Miss H. How can you tell? Perhaps my father won't wish to keep me waiting so long—or suppose you were to fall in love with me—what then? Would you postpone your own happiness?

Mr. S. (considerably confused.) In the latter event, I would, if unsuccessful in obtaining your father's consent, run off with you to the Gretna Green, in Ohio, opposite Maysville.

Miss H. Oh, but I would not consent to that. I have read of too many false priests and faithless lovers. I don't think I would trust you. I would rather rely upon my own wit to get the license. I could do it! Woman's wit can cheat the very "old boy!"

Mr. S. Yes, but woman's youth and beauty could hardly be mistaken by any clerk for age and wrinkles. (As I said this, I glanced at a female seated beside her, who was to be the bride in this instance, and who bore unmistakable signs of being upwards of forty.)

Miss H. Better late than never—don't you say so, aunt?

The Aunt. But it's not so very late with me, I'm sure. Yet I suppose he will make no scruple about my age.

Mr. S. Oh no! And yet I cannot perceive the neces-

sity of one of your years running away from home to get married.

The Groom, who was about thirty years of age. I will explain that to you. Her father and I had a personal difficulty, and he forbade me the house.

Mr. S. But the clerk of your own county could have no objection to issue the license, seeing you are both of age.

Miss H. But then the *romance* of the thing, Mr. S.; consider that. I said there ought to be a clandestine marriage, and there shall be. I always loved runaway matches, although I would not run away myself, and I am determined to enjoy the fun of this one. So just go to work, Mr. Deputy. I only wish my aunt was about seventeen, so that I could give you a specimen of woman's wit. I would cheat you, as sure as you live. I have heard all about your keenness in detecting cheats, but then the *men* undertook the business.

Mr. S. And I should like to have an opportunity to try your wit. If it was yourself, instead of your aunt, you would certainly have to return without a husband.

Miss H. That I wouldn't! I'd have the license, and a magistrate, and be married in this very room, in spite of you!

This vehement outburst produced much merriment. I proceeded without farther colloquy to fill up the blanks, and on asking the name of the lady, the aunt, forcing a blush, came forward and said, Juliet Frances Hamilton. The license was duly signed, and delivered to the groom. About this time the lively young girl complained of a sudden indisposition, and asked me in a beseeching tone if I could procure her a glass of *fresh* water. As I rose to get the glass, I perceived two men standing outside of the office near the back window, which roused my suspicions

that there was something mysterious, if not wrong, in the proceeding. I ran across the street, however, for the water, and returned in the space of about three minutes, having been detained that length of time by the young man of whom I obtained it, who insisted upon giving the glass a thorough washing. When I entered, I saw that the two gentlemen who had been standing behind the office, had joined the party within, and one of them was a *magistrate* of the place, noted for his practical jokes.

"It's all over now, Mr. S.," said Miss H., when she took the glass from her lips, her pallor being now succeeded by one of the most crimson blushes I ever beheld.

"I am glad you have recovered," said I; "you certainly look better than you did."

"That is not what I mean," she replied; "I mean the *wedding* is over. You must excuse haste—but we were really too impatient to wait till you got back—were we not, husband?" And as she said this, she clasped the arm of the groom. The truth then flashed upon me at once. The aunt had assumed the name of the niece, and the young girl had planned and executed a cheat upon me, sure enough! That was the last license issued by me. The party was not overtaken by the girl's father for several weeks. But the groom's friends mustered in his defence, and after several gun-shots, and some wounds, the couple were left together without farther molestation. The parent, however, for several months, had it in contemplation to commence legal proceedings against the clerk.

CHAPTER II.

After mature deliberation, my parents consented that I might join my elder brother in Missouri. Joseph was the pioneer of the family, and Providence seemed to crown his efforts with success. While I was building castles in the air, he had already amassed enough money to purchase our aged parents a substantial and comfortable dwelling in the village. And he was now about to begin business for himself, with a fair prospect of earning as many hard dollars in reality, as the imaginary ones I had been dreaming about.

Presto! change! No one had a greater facility of abandoning old schemes, and launching his ideas in new channels, than myself. This I attribute partly to my desultory reading, and partly to the instability of my natural disposition. No doubt for this cause I have failed in many undertakings, which might have had a successful termination, had they been perseveringly prosecuted. I have often been reproached for the habit, and exhorted to be patient. But it has had its advantages too; for it has more than once instigated me to abandon bad practices, and impolitic pursuits, which, if persisted in, might have terminated in inglorious death, or in hopeless bankruptcy.

My back was now completely turned upon the law. I sought no more the deep solitude of the woods to practice Demosthenic oratory. I consigned to the flames nearly all of my juvenile manuscripts, and put off all my philosophical, historical and poetical aspirations. Even at that early age I had sent to the publishers of periodicals more than one

specimen of my compositions, to which no manner of attention had been paid. I was now determined to be a merchant, a millionaire, and nothing else. And when I returned with my princely equipage, my trunks stowed full of U. S. Bank notes, perhaps, Miss Blanche would not hesitate to be my bride. But she would certainly have hesitated then; and her family made no effort to conceal their repugnance to my intimacy with her. Hers was one of the "first families," while mine was in the category of the opposite extreme. She had a snug independence, while I had nothing certain but the very dubious future before me. I suffered the throes of disappointed true love—and I believe the first love of boys of that age happens, in a majority of cases, as mine did, to be fixed upon objects somewhat older than themselves. And, as in my case, the affection is pretty generally reciprocated. Blanche, of course, would not marry me; and in truth I had not the impudence to ask her; but she could easily read all the unmistakable signs in my eyes and visage, of a growing passion; and, in turn she was kind enough to permit me to understand that I was not indifferent to her. This thought was a constant solace to me during several long years of absence. But we will let the scroll of the future unroll itself.

Once more I was upon the highway, trudging along in solitude, with my bundle at my back. This time I was not quite so oblivious as formerly of my condition, nor so happy in my meditations. Once or twice, as I thought of Blanche, and deplored my cruel fate, a moisture momentarily dimmed my eyes. But such emotions could not long hold one of my temperament. With a rather unusual fierceness and vehemence, I resolved to make my way in the world, and to obtain wealth, which, I began to perceive,

was the great talisman by which man's worldly objects are secured.

I reached Claysville, on the Licking river, about dark, which was not half the distance I had walked when I set out from the parental roof on the former occasion. This time I was tired, and had no appetite. My brother Jacob (another elder brother) dwelt at Claysville. He was a merchant in a small way, having bought his goods in Cincinnati on credit. He informed me that business was dull, and it was probable his creditors would sell him out before long under the hammer, unless some good luck turned up in his behalf. He likewise expected to be married in a few weeks. Both events came to pass shortly after my departure.

At Claysville, I embarked on a flat boat loaded with produce for Cincinnati, the Licking river emptying into the Ohio, opposite that city. And now I was afloat upon the water, in a rude craft, and among profane men, who devoted all their time, when not working at the oars, to cards—men whom I had never seen before, and whose manners and conversation were coarse and vulgar in the extreme. For two days and nights I realized fully the horrors of one of my age in so forlorn a condition. In vain they strove to rally my spirits; I was plunged into deep dejection. They were not really dishonest or vicious in their natures—indeed they manifested genuine compassion for me—but still I had never before been thrown among such rough associates, or subjected to such fare as sufficed for them. However, before we arrived at the mouth of the river, I became more cheerful, as I reflected upon the necessity I was under to make the most of the circumstances in which I was placed.

When we arrived at the mouth of the river, I paid the

flat boat captain three dollars for my passage, and hailing a skiff, I went over to the city, and put up at a hotel. I bought a trunk, in which I packed my clothes; and, as I was now in buoyant spirits, everything around being novel to me, and wearing a cheerful aspect, I joined a company of young men going that evening to the show. This was the celebrated "Infernal Regions," which I believe they keep there still. It was a place representing the abode of the damned. The clanking of chains, hissing of winged serpents, groans of the tormented, grins of the infernal spirits, and all represented in appalling *propria personæ;* to say nothing of the muttering thunder, the flashing lightning, the sulphurous odors, &c., altogether made up a spectacle well worthy of its expressive appellation. Many of us, on first beholding this artificial pandemonium and its appendages, were thrilled with affright; but the scene soon became familiar to us, and we then amused ourselves by marking the effect produced on the countenances of the new visitors. One of the recesses containing some of the vilest sinners, was surrounded by a steel railing, which was kept charged by a concealed galvanic battery. The company were requested not to touch that railing, and most of them, being in the secret, kept aloof. One of the visitors, however, being a rough boatman, and in the western phrase, "pretty well corned," soon forgot the injunction, and unconsciously placed his hand upon the metal to steady himself. Instantaneously he was knocked down by the shock. This produced a burst of laughter at his expense. When he arose, he turned round with an air of defiance, and shook his fists at the company. As no one seemed inclined to accept his challenge, presently he very deliberately leaned upon the railing again. Again he was knocked down. This time, when he arose, he pulled off

his coat, vest and hat, and throwing them in different directions, while the company roared with laughter, exclaimed: "Now, come on! Some one of you has knocked me down twice, and if he has any part of a man's spirit in him, he'll stand up to me face to face, and have a fair fight." We all laughed outright, which only enraged him the more. At length he was informed of his mistake, but not convinced of it, as he could not comprehend the *modus operandi* of the fluid. He was conveyed out by some of his companions, swearing, and uttering direful threats; and soon afterwards, we all returned to our lodgings, highly delighted with the entertainment, and somewhat shocked to think there was in reality, a prototype of the place we had viewed, into which we might ultimately be plunged, sure enough. I have often thought that this exhibition was calculated to do the rising generation some service. But no one of very weak nerves should venture to behold it.

The next morning I went on board the first steamer I ever saw. It was the old low pressure Belvidere, with the cabin below, and only separated from the engine by a slight board partition. Being a mere stripling in appearance, and there being but few passengers engaged, the captain charged me only about half-price for the passage to St. Louis, twelve dollars—now one can go from Pittsburgh to St. Louis for ten dollars. The novelty of my condition, new and strange objects being hourly presented to my view, soon banished all painful thoughts from my mind. The captain's son, the clerk of the boat, was about my age, and we were soon as intimate as old friends. Even then, as is too often the case now, the boat remained several days over the time appointed for it to start; and during that time I *was, of course,* boarded and lodged without expense. And *it was well it was so,* for after making some essential addi-

tions to my wardrobe, and having paid my passage money in advance to secure my berth—there were no state rooms then—there remained barely sufficient cash in my purse to pay my expenses by stage coach, from St. Louis to the place of my destination. During this delay I felt no impatience, for I was getting initiated into the mysteries of life upon the river, which afforded a constant fund of excitement. At night some would go to the theatre, or other place of amusement, while others remained on board, and amused themselves with cards, or other games. I declined the invitations to join any of these parties, partly from the condition of my finances, and partly because I occasionally witnessed among them some reckless exhibitions of depravity, to which I had not been accustomed.

At length the Belvidere departed on her way down the Ohio, and the second day we arrived at Louisville. By this time I had become acquainted with all the officers and most of the passengers on board; and I went out in company with some of them, the engineer, pilot, and the captain's son, on an excursion to see the city. They led me into several places of bad resort, such as low tippling houses, &c.; but could not induce me to partake with them. They, however, induced me to indulge in a visit to the theatre; as they assured me, after a nice calculation of the expenses to the end of my journey, (I having inconsiderately exhibited to them the whole amount of my funds,) that I had sufficient means and need not stint myself. This was the first time I had ever witnessed a performance on the stage, and as the piece enacted happened to exemplify the tricks of miscreant sharpers upon unsuspecting strangers, it had the good effect of rousing my suspicions, and making me more cautious and guarded in my intercourse with those in whose company I had been thrown. In vain

they attempted to inveigle me into a farther exploration of the premises and vicinity; I refused them with some emphasis, and at the hazard of giving offence, I embraced the first opportunity of withdrawing from them unperceived.

I left the theatre, alone, before the performance was over, and endeavored to find my way back to the boat. This was no easy thing to accomplish, for it was dark and raining. I wandered about for more than an hour in quest of the wharf, and to no purpose, although I sought information of every one I met. Their directions seemed to be contradictory, or I was incapable of comprehending them. I was now quite unhappy. My own calculations as to the sufficiency of my means to carry me to the end of my journey, did not satisfy me; and I was not without apprehensions of being robbed, if not murdered, in the streets. At length I found the Belvidere, and also found my companions, who had arrived first, by a more direct route, and who had remained till the end of the play; which, by computation, proved that I had been wandering about to no purpose for more than an hour. The only revenge they took for my abrupt desertion of them, was an unfounded conjecture that I had been engaged in an affair of gallantry. This wounded me a little, which only increased their mirth. My solemn protestations of innocence attracted the notice of one of the passengers, who had hitherto secluded himself as much as possible from the company. This was General Ashley, a member of Congress, from Missouri, as I learned during the last day of the voyage. He was an extremely slim, tall man, advanced in years; his complexion was dark, his countenance grave and dignified, and its expression enhanced by a pair of the blackest and most lustrous eyes I ever beheld. "They are only quizzing you, *young man,*" said he; "your ingenuous denial of the

charge is sufficient to convince me, for one, of your innocence." This was said in a soothing tone, and at once attached me to the general. And he seemed to take a special liking to me. On learning that I was going to Missouri, he said that he was a resident of that state, and was pleased to see young men of intelligence going thither. I can easily excuse the compliment of the politician, when I reflect upon the service he did me. He afforded me valuable information in regard to the country; and besides, did me another favor, as will be seen in the sequel, for which he deserved my lasting gratitude.

The next morning, there being an abundance of water in the river, we crossed over the boiling falls without difficulty or accident, and proceeded on our way. At that time there were more snags in the river than at present, and although steamboats were not so numerous, yet disasters were by no means unfrequent. There was a portly Roman Catholic priest on board, who frequently expressed to me his apprehensions of danger, but always in a cheerful and half bantering manner. While he kept aloof from the rest of the passengers, he was very communicative with me. I conceived a liking for him, for there was a simplicity in his conversation that charmed me. He had been long a resident of Maryland, and was now going to the diocese of Missouri. He amused me with a recital of many of his adventures in this country, (he was a foreigner by birth,) in which was mingled no little humor, which served to pass the time agreeably; but there was never anything in his anecdotes derogatory of his sacred calling. The first night after leaving Louisville, (where the priest embarked,) the boat was impeded a good deal by the masses of drift wood floating on the surface, and it was necessary sometimes to stop the engine, (there was but one engine then,)

to prevent the wheels from being broken by the logs, and sometimes whole trees, drifting about us. About ten o'clock P. M., when the priest proposed to retire, he ascertained to his discomfort that he had been allotted a berth in the immediate vicinity of the wheel house. In vain he expostulated with the clerk: all the most desirable berths had been taken by the other passengers, and the officers of the boat. But he submitted to his fate with a good grace, remarking, "if any mishap befalls me, I shall lay the blame at your door." The clerk replied: "Yes; and if a snag should happen to send you to the devil before morning, you may tell the old boy it was my fault." I tendered my berth to the priest, which he peremptorily declined taking. The old gentleman very deliberately disrobed himself, and after a brief prayer sought repose in the place that had been assigned him. An hour afterwards I followed his example, as did most of the passengers.

We had not been asleep many minutes, before we were all startled by a terrific crash, and springing to our feet, we beheld with dismay a huge snag, as large in diameter as a flour barrel, protruding some ten feet through the side of the cabin, and directly through the berth that had been occupied by the priest! Perceiving the old gentleman lying on the floor, I ran to him to ascertain the extent of his injuries, when to my surprise he rose up, still smiling, with an ebony crucifix in his hand, and declared that he felt no pain, and thought that he had received no hurt. The engine was instantly stopped, and it was ascertained that the snag had broken off at the water's edge, without doing farther injury than disabling the wheel and making an ugly hole through the side of the cabin. The pilot had run upon the snag on the right hand, while deviating from his course to avoid a floating tree on the larboard side.

The obtruding timber was soon removed by the carpenters, when we reached the shore, where we remained the rest of the night undergoing repairs. It was ascertained sure enough that the priest was uninjured, notwithstanding he had been knocked some fifteen feet from his berth; and what was more extraordinary still, his watch, which had been cast as far in another direction, was likewise uninjured, and running. But the greatest miracle of all was, that his money, which he had carried loosely in his pocket, consisting of gold and silver coins, and which had been scattered in every direction, was all recovered. Instead of venting reproaches on the clerk, the good old man uttered nothing but exclamations of joy, that he had been so signally spared. The only request he made, was to be permitted to place his mattress on the floor of the cabin, and sleep there, which was accorded him.

For several days there was no other incident worth remembering, and the voyage became tedious. At that day it was the universal practice on the western rivers, for the passengers to pass away the time at cards. Even my friend the general, made one at a game, and invited me to join the party. I did not refuse, as we played merely for amusement. I knew but little of whist, or any other game, but they soon taught me to play pretty well; and I confess it was not long before I conceived a fondness for that species of amusement.

The night before we reached St. Louis, while we were lying at the shore, the pilot, engineer and captain's son, induced me to join them in a game of loo, not for money, but simply for grains of coffee. The old general sat a small distance apart, looking on, but said nothing. Two or three times successively I succeeded in winning all the grains. At last the engineer, (a man of gigantic size, who

is yet living, I believe,) said that kind of a game was child's play, and that he would play no more, unless the grains were to represent something, he cared not how small the value. I was flushed with my success, and being unwilling to relinquish the sport, agreed that we should begin again, with sixteen grains each, each grain representing a picayune, and the pilot should be the banker. This was satisfactory, and so the game went on. My success continued, and by degrees the most of the coffee found its way to my side of the board. When one after another found himself broken, I perceived, without making any objection, for I was winning it all, that he replenished his means by handing an additional dollar to the banker, and getting sixteen more grains. Of course it was not long before the tide turned, as they were all confederated to pluck me. Soon my winnings were all gone, and I found myself minus the dollar originally invested. I betrayed some anxiety, but did not, in my eagerness, hesitate to invest another dollar, hoping for a return of my good luck. But I hoped in vain. Dollar after dollar disappeared, and my very fingers trembled with excitement. When I perceived that I had nothing remaining but a five dollar bill, in agony of heart I rose from the table, and declared I would play no more. I said I had done wrong, and confessed that I deserved to lose my money. It was in vain they attempted to persuade me that by venturing a little more, I might get it all back again. I had ventured too far already. I told them that the bill was all I had left, and as that would not suffice to pay my stage fare, I intended to undergo the penance of completing my journey on foot. But I had not sounded the depth of my losses yet. Upon reckoning up the number of grains on the table, it was found that there were some sixty-four more than had been paid for. So

there had been "cheating round that board." Although I certainly had no participation in that part of the game, I was reluctantly constrained to pay my proportion of the deficiency, which bereft me of another dollar.

I turned away in disgust from this, the first instance of my gambling; and when the party dispersed, General Ashley remarked to me, that my pluckers were a set of swindlers, and that the officers of many of the boats at that time, were pretty much of the same description, depending more upon making money in that way from unwary passengers, than by their salaries. In reply to a suggestion of mine, he said it would be best not to molest them, but to leave it to time and experience to correct the evil. He then tendered me as a loan the amount of money he supposed I would need, which I inconsiderately declined taking.

When we reached St. Louis, on, I believe, the tenth day, it was getting dark. I separated from the crowd on landing and set out alone, entire stranger as I was, in quest of cheap lodgings. I went up Main street, at that time quite a different looking avenue from what it is now, until I came to a small hotel, or rather tavern, on the right hand side. I forget whether it was the "United States," the "Eagle," or the "Washington;" but I remember that it was a diminutive, dirty concern. After agreeing upon terms, I returned with a porter to the boat, and removed my baggage to my new quarters. No chamber was given me; there was not so much as a parlor or sitting room; and all the guests were packed into the bar-room, which was filled with the fumes of tobacco, and the worse odors of adulterated liquors. There were not even chairs to sit on; only rude benches, without backs. And to add to my discomfort, the already riotous and profane company present was joined by the pilot and engineer of the Belvidere. Not

long after they entered, the bell rang for supper, and I mechanically followed the rough herd to a back room, where a table was scantily furnished, adorned with the dark fragments of dilapidated crockery, broken and rusty knives and forks, and surrounded with long greasy benches, similar to those in the bar-room. There were black coffee, black bread, fried potatoes and cabbage, and a most overwhelming odor of onions and garlic. I sat down; but did not desire the waiter to "holp me"—and as I did not ask for anything, of course I got nothing.

When I rose from the table, I sallied out, dark as it was, and somewhat inclement, (it was February,) to endeavor to find something in the novelty of the scene to dissipate my painfully gloomy thoughts. Chance directed my steps to the Post-office, and to my half-furtive inquiry for letters, to my surprise one was handed me. I read it by the light of the lamp near the window. It was from Blanche, and ran thus: "*Luke*—"(there had been a "Dear" prefixed, which had been rubbed out, and substituted by a "Dr." which had likewise been obliterated, before sealing the letter)—"I suppose you will be astonished to receive this letter from me; you know I promised only to reply to your letters; but I have just been thinking how unhappy and forlorn one must be in your condition, alone in the world, so far from home, among strangers; and I could not resist the inclination to throw into your sad lot a single little grain of comfort, provided a cheering word from your old school-mate Blanche, would suffice. I am aware what a botheration the discovery of my conduct would occasion in my uncle's family; but still, as I have a monitor within which tells me there can be no great harm in it, I am bold enough to write the first letter, inasmuch as it is not a love letter. It is nothing of the kind, Luke. I am merely your

friend, which you must distinctly understand. It will be many years, perhaps, before you will be in a condition to marry any one; and by that time, if I were to remain single, they would be calling me an old maid. No, Luke, I am not even dreaming of love matters; I only want to encourage a friend whom I esteem, to struggle manfully against the adverse waves of the world; and to rely, with a heart steadily virtuous and upright, upon his own exertions for success. And you *will* succeed, if you do right; and I hope it will be right *speedily*. You must not forget to write me as you promised. Enclose the letters in those to your mother. Good-by, and believe, however rudely fortune may treat you, you will always have a *friend* in BLANCHE."

Slowly, tenderly, and with suffused eyes, I placed the letter within my vest, next to my heart. Whatever had been the intensity of my feelings of attachment for Blanche before, there could be no longer any doubt as to their precise nature now. That arrow, which had sped on the wings of the wind so many hundred miles, had most effectually done its office. Never had Cupid taken a truer aim. It was a dead shot.

When I returned to the inn, I desired to be shown to my lodgings. The barkeeper, with the remaining inch of a tallow candle in his hand, went before, and we ascended to the second floor, which was next to the roof. The naked and dingy joists were exposed over head, and between them I saw the light of heaven through sundry holes above. As we pushed open the creaking door, I had heard a rushing, scampering noise within, which gradually subsided as we entered. When I looked round, I could perceive nothing in motion; but I saw a mysterious smile

on the lip of my conductor. The walls were in the same unfinished condition as the ceiling. There was no carpet. But there were half a dozen beds in the room, each of them having two or three occupants. By a convulsive effort I threw off my coat, and placed it on the back of an old chair.

"You'd better not leave your clothes there," said my conductor.

"Why?" I inquired.

"Because the *rats* are sometimes troublesome here, and have been known to carry off gentlemen's clothes before morning," he replied.

"Then where shall I place them?" I asked.

"Tie them up in your handkerchief, your shoes and all, and then fasten the bundle to this string suspended from the joist. The noise you heard when we came in was made by the rats scampering away. But when I take the light out, they will return."

"Friend," said I, very deliberately putting on my coat again, "I hope you will take no offence; but, if I live, I shall not remain in this house to-night."

"Nobody can blame you," he replied in an under tone; "I wish I could leave it myself, but the landlord will not pay me any wages if I go before my engagement is up. Those tough old boatmen don't mind them much; but there's no telling but what a hundred or two of big Norways might succeed in cutting *your* throat before morning. Almost every night somebody gets bit."

My mind was made up. I had now but four dollars in my pocket, which were reduced to three, after paying for my *supper*, and hiring a porter to carry my trunk away; but I went directly to the City Hotel, and demanded a good room, with as much assurance as if I had had thousands.

I resolved to call upon my friend, General A., the next morning, and avail myself of his generous offer. That determined upon, I threw myself on a comfortable bed, and slept soundly till morning.

I lost no time in waiting upon General A., at his residence on the morrow; and on learning my business, he spread open before me his well-filled pocket-book, and told me to take as much as I wanted, which I could repay at any future time when it might be convenient. I took but ten dollars; and, after expressing my thanks, and promising faithfully to enclose the like sum to him, out of the first money I should receive, took my leave, and wended my way with a light heart to the stage office, and was booked for Franklin, the place of my destination.

The next morning I set out in the coach. The road was soft and deep, there being then, as is the case, I believe, yet, no paved or Macadamized roads in Missouri. On the second day, I remember a little incident which came nigh placing me in an unpleasant predicament. When ascending a hill, the passengers had to get out and walk, to enable the horses to drag up the heavy stage. Near the road, and running parallel with it, we perceived a very pretty little animal about the size of a rabbit. The driver told me to catch it, assuring me it was one of a kind easily taken. I made a dash at it, and, instead of running away, it only paused, and erected its tail, assuming a menacing attitude. Just then one of the passengers, remembering that I must in a few moments resume my seat by his side, called out for me to desist, and informed me that it was a *polecat.* He spoke just in time to save me. I was well content to withstand the laughter of the company on escaping such an odoriferous salutation as was threatened me. No doubt, *had I been taking* my leave of the stage, they would have

permitted me to catch the tartar. Such is a specimen of western practical jokes.

Here I had my first view of a prairie, and I was charmed with it. I could easily fancy how beautiful it would be when the warm breezes of May should cause the various wild flowers to adorn it. And then, for the first time, I beheld the prairie hen or grouse in countless numbers; and ever and anon flocks of deer in the distance.

CHAPTER III.

In due course of time we arrived at the *new* town of Franklin, situated in the woods, some two miles from the river. The *old* town, which had been once the largest village above St. Louis, was rapidly undergoing one of the saddest processes incident to western villages on the great streams. The capricious and rightly-termed "Mad Missouri," was undermining and washing away the original town. More than two-thirds of it had already disappeared; and the inhabitants were then bestirring themselves to save what wrecks they could of their property. They were removing the buildings themselves (mostly frame) back to the hills; and the new village in the woods presented the grotesque appearance of a new town built in a measure of old materials.

My brother gave me a hearty welcome, and furnished me the means to discharge my debt to General Ashley. And now began my career as a Western Merchant. I *found my* position altogether a novel, and by no means an *unpleasant one.* I soon perceived that the merchant was

an important individual in society. His standing took precedence even of that of the professional gentlemen, who, at that day, at least, were rarely in affluent circumstances. Indeed, the merchants in a manner monopolized all the wealth in the country, and wielded the popular influence.

One of the partners in the establishment, which was to send a branch up the river under the charge of my brother Joseph, was daily expected to arrive on his return with the goods from Philadelphia. Letters had been received from him, announcing his arrival at St. Louis, a few days after my departure from that port. He stated that he would come up the river with his goods on the steamboat Ioway, which would be ready to start about the first of April, and might be looked for at Franklin, by the 15th. Boats were "few and far between" then, and some of them consumed two weeks, instead of two days (as now), in ascending the river.

About this time my brother and myself set off on horseback up the river, to see that the building for our new store should be completed and in readiness to receive the goods. Towards noon, we arrived opposite the famous new town of Pike Bluff, and after some delay in consequence of the great number of emigrants' wagons which were waiting to get across, we were ferried over the turbulent stream in a flat, rickety, open boat. We ascended the hill and beheld the town. It consisted alone of the new store-house, in a half finished condition. It was composed of hewed logs, the chinks betwixt them not being yet plastered up. It had a roof on, however, and afforded a shelter. The workmen were that day just sawing out openings for the doors. We prevailed on them to concentrate all their forces on one of the rooms, (there were to be just two, each *about twenty feet square,)* so that it might be shelved, and

in some degree of completion, provided the goods should happen to arrive a few days before the time appointed. They cheerfully complied, and exerted themselves to the utmost of their ability. The ugly interstices between the huge logs, were soon filled with clay and lime, and white-washed on the inside. A counter was erected, and shelves put up.

I remained with the workmen while my brother returned to Franklin, with the understanding that he would come up on the boat with the goods. All was bustle and curiosity. The people for miles round came in every day to inquire when the goods would arrive. There was but one store in the whole county, which was situated a considerable distance in the interior, and the beginning of a new town on the river, by means of the establishment of a store there, made a considerable noise in that community. I soon became acquainted with everybody; and after the first sight a mutual familiarity exists in new countries. I must own that I felt flattered by the novel importance of my position, being a sort of centre of attraction; and as I was not deficient in personal address, made the most of my advantage for the interest of the concern. Without the slightest knowledge of the value of merchandise, it was yet no difficult matter for me to produce the impression that *our* goods would be sold under the prices the good people had been in the habit of paying for similar articles; and, in consequence, the anxiety grew more intense on their part for them to arrive.

It was not long before I had explored every part of the town. The site was high and dry, but unfortunately broken up immensely by abrupt hills and deep hollows. With the exception of the road which led from the ferry to the prairie, and the small space of ground, some forty by twenty

feet, on which the store was situated, and a few transverse deer paths, every foot of the town was covered with bushes, brambles and trees. And these in many parts were impenetrably united by complete webs of wild vines. More than once in my explorations, I was under the necessity of using my knife as a means of extrication. Not unfrequently, the weather being now warm and pleasant, I was startled and terrified by the warning sound of the rattlesnake. The deer leaped through the bushes within forty feet of me; and the wild turkey crossed my path with seeming unconcern. These little incidents gave an additional glow to my anticipations of future enjoyment.

I have said that the building my brother and myself were to occupy, was the only one in town. This was an error, provided a mud shanty of eight by ten feet dimensions, might be considered a second house. This hovel was occupied by a Canadian Frenchman, who had married an American woman in the vicinity, and who dwelt there only at intervals, when he returned from his annual expeditions far up the river, with the fur and trading company, of which General Ashley was the proprietor. But there was another house in the suburbs of the town, accessible by a narrow serpentine path, (literally, as well as figuratively,) through the hazel bushes, along one of the ridges terminating at the intersection of one of the valleys. This was a dwelling built somewhat after the fashion of our store, only the logs were not hewed; they were merely barked. The crevices, however, were stopped sufficiently to hide objects within; and the clap-board roof afforded tolerable shelter from ordinary rains. This house was occupied by Mr. White and his family. This was an amiable family, recently removed from Virginia, (on the James river,) with the wreck of what had once been an ample for-

tune. The wreck consisted of some half dozen superannuated negroes, and about a dozen of their children and grandchildren. Mr. White had met with misfortune by being too kind and generous to his friends. To relieve them from pressing pecuniary difficulty, he had become security for them, and the return made for such benefits conferred, was the entailment on his family of permanent distress. His two plantations, one inherited by himself, and one by his wife, were sold to meet his liabilities; and the surplus proceeds, after discharging the debts not of his own contracting, merely sufficed to defray his expenses to the far west, and to buy him a few scanty acres in the wilds of Missouri. His family consisted of himself, his wife, his wife's sister, and three children, one son and two daughters, all nearly grown, and pretty well educated. But notwithstanding the privations they had endured, I do not remember to have met with a more happy family in my life. Their uninterrupted cheerfulness, and unassumed contentment, in the comparatively miserable condition to which they had been so heartlessly reduced, afforded a most convincing exemplification of the consolations and advantages of religion to those in adversity; and it may be hoped that its benefits apply as well to conditions of prosperity, though perhaps not often with the same force and effect. With this family my brother and myself engaged to board, for about one dollar and a half a week, each.

Nevertheless, Mr. White, in Missouri, was regarded as a rich man, and his daughters, Mary and Ellen, were looked upon as heiresses. The fact that he possessed some twenty negroes, old and young, made him somewhat famous there as a man of wealth. That he had no considerable real estate, in Missouri, where land of the very best description could be had for one dollar and a quarter

per acre, was a matter of no importance. His credit was *unlimited*, that bane of improvident families; and every species of property he might desire, was easily attainable. In truth, Mr. White's circumstances and prospects were equal, if not superior in most respects, to those of the generality of the inhabitants of the country. His cheerfulness extended to his servants, who made the little huts they occupied in the rear of the rude mansion, vocal with their "Old Virginny" songs. With a hearty good-will they drove the oxen, and ploughed up the virgin soil of the prairie a mile or so distant, which as yet belonged to the government, but which Mr. White designed at some convenient day in future to purchase. Mr. White followed the example of others; and at that early day it was rarely the case that any one fortunately possessing the ability, dared to incur the odium of entering public lands cultivated by previous settlers.

By the 15th April, we had the room, originally designed for the counting-room, shelved round, and prepared for the reception of the goods. The cash-drawer was ready, and I had cut a hole through the counter to slip the money into it. We postponed making a desk, until we could empty one of the shoe or hat boxes for that purpose. The last thing we did on the memorable morning of the 15th, was to put a lock on the door, and a bolt on the window shutter.

About ten o'clock A. M., the people began to arrive. The first that came were from below, some eight miles down the river, who had distinctly heard the steamer puffing on her way up. At that day the steamboats puffed, and coughed, and wheezed immensely louder than they now do. These voluntary messengers had spread the news as they came along, and many others followed them to town to see the new goods landed.

It was not long before the cough of the boat could be heard at Pike Bluff, and she was only hid from view by an intervening island. By the time I had procured three or four wagons with ox teams to haul the goods up the hill, the boat had landed, having our goods on board sure enough, and my brother Joseph, also.

Some six or seven boxes of dry-goods, and thirty or forty other packages of less size and value, piled up on the river bank, made the people stare; and my brother and myself were regarded as young merchant Crœsuses. And some six thousand dollars worth of goods made a respectable pile, even then: but at this day of low prices, when two hundred dollars worth of dry-goods will fill a W box, that sum would make a very different show on the bank of any river. There were other descriptions of merchandise besides dry-goods. Hardware, queensware, shoes, hats, sugar, coffee, salt, spice, pepper, dye-stuffs, medicines, (calomel and barks in enormous quantities,) besides a long catalogue of other articles, made up the merchant's assortment in Missouri, eighteen years ago. And the beauty of the business was, no flaming advertisements or red-letter hand bills were required to make known the establishment of a new store in a new place. Every one took an interest in it, and lost no opportunity of spreading the news far and wide. In the hearty welcome the farmers gave every new merchant, there was a deep policy which we did not perceive at the time. It was natural that each "new-comer" would increase the competition, and the more competition that existed, of course the lower would be the prices. And at that time, it must be confessed by every old western merchant who may chance to peruse *these memoirs*, we made splendid profits. "One per *cent.," as the trader* termed it, when he sold an article that

cost one dollar for two, was no unusual figure; and although the merchant would only sell some ten or twelve thousand dollars worth per annum, instead of twenty or thirty thousand, as at this day, yet his balance sheet generally exhibited a more satisfactory result than it has done in more modern times.

My first day as a merchant, or rather as a merchant's clerk, was a busy day. The opening and marking of goods, and placing them in order on the shelves, occupied the whole of the day, retarded and obstructed as we were continually, by the remarks and inquiries of the eager crowd around us. Every piece of goods taken from the boxes was subjected to the inspection of the bystanders; and it would have been impolitic to have repulsed this interference. It was our policy to cultivate the good will of all. But there was a mark beyond which they could not go, or rather they could not go through it at all. Several of them had been either merchants or merchants' clerks themselves, in Virginia, or Kentucky; and had secretly conspired to ascertain our private mark, proposing to derive advantage from a knowledge of the cost of the goods. One of them had the following letters pencilled on a slip of paper: $b^1l^2a^3c^4k^5s^6m^7i^8t^9h^0$; another $c^1l^2e^3a^4n^5s^6h^7i^8r^9t^0$; hoping by comparison with the letters placed on the tickets, to find that we made use of the same letters so long used by other merchants. But they were mistaken; and their countenances exhibited unequivocal signs of disappointment when they began to inspect our letters, which were as follows: $s^1u^2a^3b^4d^5t^6h^7r^8v^9z^0$. They gave it up in despair, and relied upon our generosity not to impose upon them.

Towards night all our inquisitive company left us, many *of them promising* to bring in their wives and daughters

the next day, or in a few days, when we should be in readiness to wait upon them. After night, and deep in the night, the labors of my brother and myself continued. The practiced merchant will need no special assurance from me, to believe that it was no slight undertaking for us to open, mark, and properly arrange, ready for business, six thousand dollars' worth of goods in one day and evening. At length our labors were completed, and we sat down on the log steps before the door to rest, and to arrange our plans for the next day. But we were completely exhausted, and mused long in silence. The loneliness of the scene made a deep impression on me. The moon was midway in the heavens, casting down a flood of light, which made the smallest objects distinctly visible. The river, so turbid by day, resembled a sheet of liquid silver by night. The trees that fringed its margin, and those around us, were perfectly motionless, not the slightest breath of air disturbing the repose of their half-grown leaves. The only sound we heard was the plaintive note of a solitary whip-poorwill. The stillness which brooded over the scene, threw but a momentary shade of melancholy over Joseph, as he was less susceptible of poetical influences than myself. His mind was more inclined to dive into the chances of the future, than to dwell upon the past; and I found all my romantic meditations suddenly put to flight by the following inquiry:

"Luke, how much do you say we will sell to-morrow?"

"I suppose," said I, after some little bewilderment and hesitation, "about seventy-five dollars' worth."

"How much of it do you think will be in cash?"

"I predict about half."

"That is your belief," said he, smiling; "now I will *make a guess.* I say we will sell one hundred dollars'

worth, seventy-five of which will be in ready money. It is always the case that the first day's sales in a new establishment, exhibit a larger proportion of cash than they do afterwards. At first the really good and responsible men feel a delicacy in asking to be credited. They wait to have their undoubted responsibility made known to us by their neighbors. This is the pride and pleasure a rich man enjoys in a community; and when you shall have learned to flatter this vanity in a dexterous manner, you will possess one of the requisites of the merchant. On the other hand, it is quite natural for those men who are 'not good,' in mercantile parlance, to thrust themselves boldly forward at the beginning, presuming we are ignorant of their inability to pay, and endeavor to obtain credit. Of this class you must beware, and keep constantly on your guard. Mr. White has kindly consented to furnish me with information which will be of service. He has given me the names of most of the 'good' men, for ten or fifteen miles round; you will find the list in the cash-drawer. You can easily refer to it when people are looking at the goods, without any one perceiving what you are doing. And when you find any one present in the 'good' list, it will not be difficult for you to intimate to him in a low tone, so as not to be overheard by the rest, that you will be happy to sell him whatever he may need, on a credit of six months; at the end of six months, if he is not ready to pay, we will take his note, bearing ten per cent. interest, which, you will remember, is the legal rate in Missouri. We must sell all we can to 'good' men on time; they are not so particular about the prices as those who buy for cash. Nevertheless, when we can get the money down, it is still better; and it will be well for us, when we per-

ceive any one has the cash about him, to endeavor to get it all, before we hint anything about credit."

"Very well," I replied; "but must I always adhere to the selling prices marked on the goods, in figures?"

"I was just about to speak on that subject," said he; "and it is one of the most difficult parts of the business to manage adroitly. It is better learned by observation than by verbal directions. To cash buyers the prices should be as uniform as possible—and only varied in consideration of the quantity they buy. In regard to the others, there is always more or less risk of ultimate loss when goods are sold on time. The 'good' man to-day, may be ruined by some unforeseen mishap to-morrow. But there are certain *degrees* of risk between which you must learn to discriminate. For instance there is Dr. Greenleaf, living some six miles out in the prairie, who is worth twenty-five thousand dollars, and his neighbor Gates, not worth one thousand dollars. Neither of them is in debt, and both are responsible for any amount they will be likely to desire to purchase on credit. But still the probability of the latter 'breaking' before the former, should either of them 'fall through,' is quite apparent. Hence, one is safer than the other; and hence, it would be both just and politic for us to put goods a shade lower to the former than the latter—but with a sly injunction that the price is not to be told to any one, which is another means of pleasing a rich man, for all like to be made conscious of the realization of the advantages which wealth is supposed to confer. You will soon become acquainted with these and a thousand other peculiarities of the people. A village store is one of the best places in the world to learn human nature."

By this time I complained of weariness, and we got up *to make arrangements* for sleep. We had no bed; but it

was a part of the western merchant's discipline to sleep without one. It was not long before the litter was swept from the floor, and two pallets, consisting of coarse cotton cloth and blankets, with two pieces of flannel as pillows, were in readiness to receive our weary limbs.

It was in vain I sought repose. My over-wrought system refused to slumber. A feverish excitement possessed my brain, and I turned and tossed on my hard bed for more than an hour, without enjoying any of the benefits of 'nature's sweet restorer.' Once I placed my hand beyond my scanty couch, and my fingers dropped into a crack in the floor about an inch wide. I had noticed a number of these crevices in the day time, but had then attached no importance to them. Now my active imagination did not fail to conjure up all kinds of venomous serpents, gliding but a few inches beneath us. I fancied that some of them had ascended into the room, and might be in the fatal coil near my head, ready to bury their fangs in the first one of us that should move. By a convulsive effort I succeeded in springing into a chair on which my clothes were placed, and after igniting a lucifer match, and casting a hurried glance at my brother to see that he was safe, proceeded to light a candle. My movement awoke Joseph, who sat upright in amazement, and demanded the cause of my strange conduct. I told him that there were serpents under the floor, the house not being underpinned; that I was sure I had heard them moving about under the place where I had been lying; and that there was nothing to prevent them from entering the room through the ample crevices in the floor. Joseph reproached me with silly dreaming; but at the same time he rose slowly from his position, and looked cautiously around him. He then followed my example, and placed his pallet on the counter. The counter

was just long enough between the window and the angle where it turned towards the partition wall, to admit of our lying full length on it without touching each other's feet. My head was just under the window, and his in the opposite direction. Our feet met in the centre, or were only a few inches apart. By degrees I sank into an unquiet slumber on my narrow bed. But I was restless, and moved about a good deal during the night. Once I was awakened by my feet coming in contact with the floor, and just in time to arrest my head, which was rapidly following them.

"What's the matter now, Luke?" inquired Joseph, lifting his head in the profound darkness that reigned around—I supposed that to be his attitude from the elevation of his voice.

"Oh, nothing. I merely rolled off the counter, but did not hurt myself," said I.

"Why, Luke," replied he, "the counter is thirty inches wide. A western merchant ought to be able to sleep without inconvenience, on a board of eighteen inches width."

By this time I had composed my limbs for another trial. But I was doomed to meet with but little success that night. I could only attain a semi-repose; my mind was incessantly disturbed by frightful dreams. Once more I fancied that I was about to become the victim of a rattlesnake; and just as it was in the act of springing upon me, I awoke. At that instant I heard a low rubbing sound, and felt a slight movement against the top of my head. For a moment I remained horror-stricken, and utterly at a loss what to do. If I moved, I might be bitten—whereas it was said that a snake, and particularly the rattlesnake, would never strike an inanimate object. These thoughts rushed through my brain with the rapidity of lightning, and for several minutes I remained perfectly motionless. Again

the rustling was heard, and the movement continued against my hair, which doubtless stood straight out from my head. At length I could no longer bear this loathsome proximity of the venomous reptile. I made a spring to my knees, at the same time seizing my pillow, with which, as I faced about, I began to belabor the deadly foe, and brushed rapidly to the right and left, for the purpose of dashing him to the floor. It may be supposed that my surprise was great, and relief profound, when my brother exclaimed:

"Luke, what in the world are you beating my feet for?" The voice came from the front, instead of the rear of me. I was completely bewildered. I had contrived to turn entirely round, like one on a pivot, and had been lying with my head in the immediate vicinity of Joseph's feet, which had occasionally produced the motion and the low sound that my keen ears had detected. But how I had carried my pillow with me I could never explain. I made a frank confession of my case to Joseph, who laughed heartily at my imaginary perils.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning by the time the sun was up, we had everything brushed up and displayed to the greatest advantage. It was a bright morning, and we anticipated a busy day. When we returned from breakfast, the wife and daughters of Mr. White accompanied us to the store, and were our first customers. Joseph desired to see my first essay as a salesman, and so he put me forward to wait on the ladies. There was no difficulty as to the prices

(for they came determined to buy,) nor in the selections, as the stock was fresh and well assorted; but when I came to the measuring and cutting part of the business, I betrayed considerable awkwardness and confusion. At that time six yards of calico made a dress, and I attempted to cut off two dresses for the two daughters from different pieces. After measuring off the first dress, I severed it from the piece by the slow process of cutting it with my scissors. Joseph then instructed me always to tear off the calico. The next dress I tore off. I then sold Mrs. White a gingham dress, and forgetting that gingham was not calico, I tore it also, but the rent ran lengthwise instead of across! Upon perceiving my mishap, Joseph interposed and arrested my career. He should have done it sooner; for upon examination, it was found that I had cut seven yards for one of the calico dresses, and only five for the other. This chagrined my brother, and mortified me exceedingly. I remarked, however, that the occurrence would doubtless prove beneficial, in rendering me more careful in future. And it was ascertained by the ladies, who sympathized with me, that the split in the gingham would not injure the dress, and by cutting off, or rather tearing off, another yard, the second calico dress could be made; and to make all whole, Miss Mary declared she would have the seven yards, as she preferred to have her dresses made full. I now felt relieved of my painful embarrassment, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead, displayed renewed activity in showing the goods to the ladies. I soon attained a degree of familiarity with the various locations of the goods, and acquired sufficient confidence in my capacity to relieve my brother of all supervision over my actions. The ladies merely asked the prices of the different descriptions of goods they bought, and

never attempted to "beat me down." Hence, I sold everything at the marked prices, and of course made handsome profits. As I cut off the goods, Joseph noted them down; but when the party departed, they did not ask for the bill. We were boarding with them, and it was the same as cash to us. The amount sold them was thirty dollars' worth, and the eastern cost of them only about sixteen dollars. This was a good beginning, and we were in high spirits.

The Whites had not been long gone, before I espied a party riding along the narrow road through the bushes, towards the store. This was Mr. Middletown, his wife, and Maria, his daughter. Mr. Middletown was one of the most substantial farmers in that section of the country, and we had been apprised that he was famous for "screwing" great bargains with the merchants, and generally paid the money down. Joseph took out a chair and assisted Mrs. Middletown to alight from her horse, while I attempted to follow his example in assisting the daughter. Miss Maria was exceedingly pretty, a fair, fresh, regular-featured prairie flower, which confused my vision very considerably when I first beheld her, and reminded me of Blanche. I was only twenty, and too susceptible of new impressions. My hand quivered a little as she placed hers in it, to step down from her horse. Her horse was a very tall one, and in making a long step down to the chair we became unsteady, and she fell upon my shoulder. I prevented her from falling to the ground, however, and aided her in adjusting her skirt, which had hung by the pommel of the saddle. Our embarrassment was mutual, and was much increased by this remark from her father, who was fond of a joke:

"*See how those* young folks are blushing at each other,

out there!" Maria dropped her veil and joined her mother in the store, while I turned my face away, and tied the horse to a bush.

"Well," said the old man, after the party had been seated a few minutes, during which time they had surveyed the well-filled shelves, "I suppose you are going to sell goods low, now; at least you'll say so."

"I think you'll say so, too," replied Joseph, "when I tell you the prices."

"Let us see, then," he continued; "what is the price of that blue gingham?"

"Fifty cents a yard," replied Joseph, handing it down.

"You don't call that low, do you?" said he, examining the goods.

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Middletown, who now came to our relief, and was a judge of the article. "The same kind of goods out at the mill sells for sixty-two and a half cents, as you know very well, Mr. Middletown, for you bought me a dress of it last fall, and could only beat him down six and a quarter cents."

"Yes, it is less than M. S. & Co. sell theirs," remarked Miss Maria, in a low voice.

The old gentleman still endeavored to maintain his dry incredulous smile, but the odds were against him. In truth the *credit* price of the article was fifty-six and a quarter cents, it having cost thirty cents; but Joseph knew his man, and had resolved to make a good impression at the start.

The dress was sold, measured and cut off by Joseph, who waited upon the old folks, while I attended to the daughter. Miss Maria, after inspecting some lace, which *she acknowledged* was pretty and cheap, told me to measure off two or three yards of it. I noticed that when either

of the ladies made a purchase, the old man's eyes were sure to be upon Joseph and myself alternately; and so, when I was measuring the lace very carefully, that no farther blunder should be committed by me that day, he turned abruptly towards me, and asked,

"Where are your thumbs?"

"There they are," said I, after some surprise and hesitation, looking first at him and then at the members named.

"Don't you throw her in your thumbs?" he continued, with a grave countenance.

I paused in astonishment, and forgot how many yards I had measured. Miss Maria smiled at my lack of comprehension, but seemed to deprecate the interference of her father. The old man, perceiving my ignorance of his meaning, determined, "by way of a joke," to increase my confusion.

"Oh, you must give her your thumb," he repeated, with imperturbable gravity. "You can't refuse that?"

Having somewhat recovered from my embarrassment, I now mustered an unusual degree of assurance; and resolved to "carry on the joke," I laid down the yard-stick, and stretching my arm over the counter, replied:

"I hope I have too much gallantry to be 'bluffed off' in this manner—and, by your leave, I'll make Miss Maria a tender of my whole hand."

This was too much for the timid, modest daughter. She sank down in a chair and hid her scarlet face, while the rest gave vent to an irrepressible explosion of laughter.

"Good! good!" exclaimed Mrs. M. "Mr. M. is always full of his jokes with the young men, and I am glad he has met with his match, at last."

Good humor was now completely established, and we *were as familiar* and unreserved as old acquaintances.

Such is the way in the west. The slightest incident, or briefest encounter of wits, although there was no premeditated wit in my remark, will be sure to make persons hitherto totally unknown to each other, the most intimate acquaintances.

They now purchased our goods freely, and the dollars jingled merrily in the drawer. Other parties came in, and the store was soon filled to its utmost capacity, while my brother and myself were kept as busy as bees. But I was doomed to blush for my ignorance more than once that day. Miss Maria, after buying sundry descriptions of goods, and having the advantage of the thumb's breadth thrown in, after the process had been explained to me, cast her eyes repeatedly to a shelf where the stockings were kept in small paper boxes. I waited for her to name the article she wished to see in that direction, and for a long time she was reluctant to name it. Finally, in reply to my interrogatory whether there was anything on that shelf she was desirous of looking at, she had the resolution to say, "I will look at your hose, if you please, sir." That seemed to me to be a very singular request. It also attracted the old man's attention, who looked on with a quizzical smile. After a pause, I sprang over the counter and took down from the side of the door, where they had been hung up by a string run through their eyes, a dozen black *garden hoes*. I perceived in an instant, from the girl's manner, that another blunder had been committed by some body.

"*White* hose, if you please," she said quickly, hoping to correct my mistake before her father should observe it. But she was too late—he was already laughing heartily at *me*. But the old lady came to our relief.

"*She wants stockings*—why don't you say stockings, at

once, Maria? there is nothing more indelicate in it, than to ask for flannel, which everybody knows is intended for a petticoat."

We succeeded in making good our retreat under cover of the old lady's battery, and endured no farther molestation from the old man. But nevertheless, as all these occurrences were narrated in the neighborhood, I was to be the mark for many a jocular shaft afterwards.

But if my ignorance was great as a seller of goods, it fell short of that of some of the buyers. There were two men in the store dressed in buckskin hunting shirts, who lived some fifteen miles off, up the river.

"What is the price of this bolt of brown domestic?" asked one of them.

"That piece," said my brother, "is only twenty cents."

"That is cheap," said the other. And after a little consultation, the first said he would take it, and as he said so he placed a twenty-cent piece in my brother's hand, and placed the goods, containing thirty yards, under his arm.

"I meant it was twenty cents a yard," said my brother, beholding him with astonishment.

"But you didn't say so, stranger," said the man's comrade. "It was a fair bargain, stranger; and I will make oath as a witness to it."

Here was a difficulty. We were informed by Mr. Middletown, that the men bore bad characters, and were not too good to take a dishonest advantage of us. The one who had the goods was obviously intoxicated, and his thick brogue betrayed the desperate Irishman. Joseph grew angry, and told him he could not keep the goods without paying twenty cents for every yard it contained. He said he would. Joseph, understanding that Mr. Brass, a constable, was over at Mr. White's house, went thither

in quest of him. While he was gone, I handed back the money to the man, and told him he had better put down the goods without having any farther trouble about the matter. He doggedly refused, saying he had fairly bought and paid for the whole piece. I said he had not. He said I *lied.* Now I was neither very brave nor quarrelsome. But such a point-blank insult, in the presence of Miss Maria, and half a dozen other ladies, was more than my young blood could bear. Without the slightest reflection, and quicker than thought, I broke the yard stick, with which I was measuring a dress for Miss Maria, over the fellow's head. It staggered him considerably. After recovering from the effects of the blow, he stood for a moment revengefully scowling at me. He then turned round without uttering a word and walked out. A moment after, one of the females standing near the door uttered a cry, and I saw the man with a fierce eye and black brow returning with an axe in his hand, which he had picked up in front of the house. I had no means of retreat, if I had been disposed to withdraw myself. On he came, in spite of the screams of the women, and the persuasions of the men. He entered the door, and deliberately elevated the fearful instrument in the act of hurling it at me. By an instinctive effort of self-preservation, I seized a two-pound iron weight, and threw it at his head. It took effect, striking the upper part of his forehead, and glancing up *through his hat* without knocking it from his head, and passing out of the door almost with the velocity of a cannon ball. Such is the astonishing power of which a small arm is capable in a moment of sudden peril. The man fell as one who had been shot through the brain. The skull, fortunately, was not injured; but there was a terrible gash cut on his head; and when consciousness returned, he bled very pro-

fusely. He relinquished the goods. His companion, fearing to meet the constable, who knew him of old, had slipped out of sight. But the "bloody Irishman" swore vengeance against me, as he sat upon a stump and tore his damaged hat to tatters with his teeth. When Joseph returned, (who did not find the officer he went in quest of,) and learned that the man had endeavored to take my life with an axe—I, a mere stripling—it was with difficulty he could be restrained from administering additional punishment to that I had given him. I had acted impulsively; my brother would have gone to work more deliberately. Joseph was always ready to resent an affront, and with a perfect recklessness as to the consequences to himself. I was generally more circumspect, and had a natural repugnance to personal difficulties. However, I was now a hero and wit in spite of my nature.

The rather "thrilling incident" above narrated, was only a matter of five minutes' wonder in the famous town of Pike Bluff. Even the females dismissed the affair from their minds in a very short space of time, and re-commenced business. But my agitation was considerable, and not of such brief duration, although I strove to conceal it as much as possible. I was made uneasy by the continued mutterings of the bloody fellow, who kept up a sort of harsh soliloquy, as he sat on the stump; and his threats of using the rifle, and other means of vengeance, occasionally reached my ears. Such scenes and threats were, perhaps, familiar to the old inhabitants of the country; but not to me. And, as a matter of precaution, I bought a rifle, myself, that day, from an uncle of Miss Maria, who subsequently joined the party at the store. The Irishman was informed of the fact, and warned to be careful in his future behavior; and, indeed, upon receiving this intelligence, after casting several

fearful glances towards the door, he quietly mounted his horse and rode away.

Before the day was over, my hands were actually sore with cutting goods, weighing sugar, coffee, nails, bar iron, castings, salt, &c. Here, in this beautiful and proud city, such employments would no doubt be looked upon as degrading, even by the most destitute and dependent shopkeeper's clerk in Second street. But it was and is quite different in a far-western store. And what was more, the lily hands of a beautiful girl, the daughter of the richest inhabitant in that region, did not hesitate to hold the bag while I poured the groceries into it—nor did she decline afterwards to have the unseemly burden affixed to her saddle when she rode home.

At length, when the sun had declined low in the west, the last of the company departed, and we were enabled, for the first time during the whole of that day, to sit down and rest ourselves. We had not even taken the time to eat our dinners; but soon the tooting horn apprised us that supper was ready. After returning from our boarding-house, we sat down to sum up the result of the day's business. Joseph added up the items charged on the books, while I counted the cash. The former amounted to fifty odd, and the latter to a hundred dollars. We were in the highest spirits. It was true we discovered a few spurious coins in the drawer, and it might be that one or two of the small accounts on the books were of a doubtful character; nevertheless, the whole of the goods sold, had not cost more than ninety dollars, and a fine profit had been undoubtedly realized. It was a fine day's work for any country, and if every day had produced the same result, a *fortune* could have been realized in a few years. But it *was not a fair* sample. We had dull days there as well as *elsewhere.*

Yet we did a good business. Our beginning was propitious in many respects. My encounter with the desperate Irishman sufficed to protect us against similar attempts of the like character in future. It convinced such persons that we were not the timid effeminate youths they took us for. We had been bred in the Kentucky school, and were not novices either in a "frolic or a fight."

But the *thumb* incident was the most lucky occurrence of all. It was rumored over the country, that I, a "tall, handsome young man," was in the habit of offering my hand *in marriage* to all the girls that came to our store to deal. I might have been vain in conjecturing the cause—I was more than once truly annoyed and humiliated with the fact—nevertheless, it was true, that for weeks there was a constant succession of new female visitors at the establishment. I was repeatedly assured that many of them seriously believed the tale which had been so industriously circulated; that some earnestly designed to take me at my word, should I pronounce it: while others merely indulged the irrepressible curiosity of the sex, to witness the offer which it was generally believed I was in the habit of making, and then to act according to circumstances. It is certain that an immense number of them came; and it is likewise certain that most of them left a portion, if not all, of their "loose change" with us. But I was certainly not much flattered with some of the supposed candidates for my hand, however cheerfully I might give them my "thumb." Some of them were exceedingly fat, broad-shouldered, flat-footed, rough-handed, yellow-necked, freckle-faced, red-haired amazonian aspirants! And, in consequence, the gibes and jokes of my male acquaintances became in time almost insupportable.

Some of the girls were as bold in their speech and man

ners, as they were masculine in their dimensions. I remember one in particular, who resolved to make herself merry at my expense. Her features were rather pretty, but her education had been sadly neglected. She was the daughter of the proprietor of one of the many salt works in that region. Her father, Mr. Beckel, was likewise the representative of the county in the legislature. As he was a pretty rough specimen of humanity, and moved out of the country with his family, at an early day, to pursue his public career in Texas, I think there can be no impropriety in designating him so distinctly. He will be recognized at once by my Missouri readers; he was famous for shooting, wrestling, fighting, gambling, drinking, and all the other characteristics of too many of the members of the legislature at that crude time.

Miss Polly, one day, having paid for the goods she had purchased, sat down right before me, and looking me steadily in the face, smiled me out of countenance. There were one or two strangers in the house; but in those wilds it was seldom that the presence of a third party was permitted to interfere with the designs of lovers, much less with the projects of romping females. She had a female companion with her, who alone had accompanied her to the store. This companion was a coarse, red-faced giggling Miss of fifteen, who rarely spoke at all; but when she did speak, her voice was as harsh and hoarse as that of an over-grown boy of seventeen. My brother was absent, on a ride into the country.

"Will you have anything else, Miss Polly?" I inquired, after a pause, and with an effort to assume some assurance.

"Yes," said she.

"*Then I shall* be happy to accommodate you."

"Very well," said she. "I have bought your goods, understanding that *you* were to be thrown in afterwards."

This caused the strangers to turn round and adjust themselves in comfortable hearing positions, that they might enjoy the fun. Every man, woman and child in the country, was always ready to enjoy any description of fun. The young Miss at her side looked on in solemn seriousness, and perhaps really thought I was to be taken along home with them like goods tied up in bundles.

"But you won't have me, I know?" I replied, now resolved to outface her, if possible.

"But I know I will—so you are mistaken," said she, firmly.

"Well, I'm willing," said I, curious to see how far she would go.

"So am I—there's no back out in me!" she continued, rising up. The other girl rose up too.

"I'll try you!" said I, leaping over the counter. "Will you marry us on the spot?" I continued, speaking to one of the strangers.

"Yes, that I will, if you wish it," said he, stepping forward.

I now expected Miss Polly to "hang fire," to use a hunter's phrase. But I was in error. She was "true as steel." She grasped my proffered hand with such vigor as to make the ends of my fingers tingle.

"Go on, stranger!" said she, with a compressed lip.

"Then I pronounce you man and ——"

"Stop a moment!" said I, putting my hand on his mouth. "Perhaps her father won't consent—perhaps he'd shoot me. Perhaps we're carrying the joke too far—perhaps you *are* a magistrate, sure enough!" I continued, releasing my hand, and springing back over the counter, trembling

with affright, as the thought flashed upon me that no licenses were required in Missouri, all magistrates being permitted to solemnize marriages, and that no particular form of solemnization was prescribed.

I now observed, too, that Miss Polly's countenance had forsaken her. She became quite pale. Mr. Middletown, the father of Maria, at that moment came in, and declared that he knew the *stranger* to be a commissioned justice of the peace! And so, really, Miss Polly had *almost* caught me. It was never ascertained, to a certainty, whether the whole affair had been devised by her. A majority of the people believed it to have been so. For some minutes she hung her head, like one detected in a shameful act, but finally strove to laugh it off, and joined the laugh at my expense, when the *stranger* (who afterwards became her husband), departed. I felt as if it was no laughing matter, but at the same time tried to laugh with the rest, as the glad consciousness of my escape grew upon me.

"Well, Miss Polly, what would you have done with me, if we had been married, sure enough?" I asked, when the merriment had subsided.

"I suppose I should have tied you on the horse behind me, and taken you home," she promptly replied, amid renewed shouts of laughter.

"Yes, but you know," said I, "according to law, the husband is the lord and master of the wife. I might choose to command, rather than obey. I might be a tyrant, and lead you a wretched life."

"Pshaw! the law is nothing. If the husband is strong enough to make the wife do as he pleases, I suppose he will govern her. But you couldn't do it if I had you. I would be the master. I am the strongest. I can beat *you running, riding,* wrestling, or at anything else you can

name;"—and she squared herself as if willing to put me to the test.

"Don't take a banter—don't take a banter, Luke!" cried several of the company.

But I did "take a banter," and from a woman. Yet it availed me nothing. Miss Polly was determined to make an exhibition of her prowess. Embracing an opportunity when I was standing with my face towards the shelves, she placed her hands under my arms, and absolutely lifted me over the counter.

"Now!" said she, "I could tie you, like a turkey gobbler, and take you home with me. But I won't do it. I'll let you off this time, as I'm *bound* to have you for my husband, some of these days."

"Well," said I, beginning to grow tired of the scene, as the laugh was altogether on her side, "if you will let me go, and wait till I get strong enough to manage you, I'll marry you, just to have my revenge."

"If I had you, I'd feed you well, and make a man of you. But I'll take your promise, before all these witnesses. Now go; bring our horses. We've had enough fun for one day."

I took her at her word; and when I brought her horse before the door, she pushed aside the chair I had taken out, and placing her hand on the animal's neck, leaped from the ground into the saddle. As she rode away, she turned her impudent face round, and said, "*I'll have you yet!*" I remember her strange look to this day. It seemed to express a mixture of real chagrin and disappointment.

Nor was my disquietude allayed on learning that she was a kind of Helen M'Gregor, in her neighborhood; that she was a great reader of novels of that class, and was famous *for her bold* eccentricities. For months afterwards,

in my peregrinations, I knew not which I dreaded most to confront me in my solitary paths, the desperate Irishman, or that bold girl. Her father sometimes plagued me by terming me his son-in-law. She was continually sending me messages. Once she wrote me a note by one of her father's negroes, who had been sent to the store for some sugar and tea. It began with "Dear husband," and ended with, "you will soon be called for by your true and lawful ——." It had a P. S., stating that one word more from Mr. ——'s lips, would have made me hers—and that she intended to bring him soon to pronounce it.

It was now midsummer, and had become excruciatingly dull. As the mercury rose, my brother Joseph's spirits fell. His was an active mind, and was rarely occupied with more than one of two subjects, business and love, alternately—and indeed he paid his addresses to his lady like a man of business, rather than a romantic Orlando. For hours, each day and night, after the expiration of the first two months, which was in effect the expiration of the business season, Joseph was employed in laborious mathematical calculations, endeavoring to solve the problem in advance, viz., the net profits of the first year's business. Every loose scrap of foolscap lying about the desk or counter, was covered with figures. More than once, he had succeeded in demonstrating a most desirable result, when, unfortunately, the discovery of an error in his additions or multiplications, plunged him into a fit of vexation and despondency. In vain I suggested the futility of all such mere "abstractions," and contended that the amount of gains figured up, whether great or small, must yield to the tangible inexorable result, to be ascertained at the expiration of the year. He could not sit with folded hands and await the time of reckoning. His vigorous and rest-

less mind had to be kept in constant exercise. Once or twice, it is true, he made an effort to dismiss his business anxieties from his teeming head, and sat down to play drafts with me. I could always beat him. I could concentrate all my faculties on the game; while his thoughts ever and anon wandered back to his business. This mortified him exceedingly, and was a source of fretfulness to his impatient temper. He was ambitious, and liked to excel in everything he undertook. At times, he would toss the board aside, and seize a book from the shelf, (western merchants always keep a limited assortment of books, as Messrs. G. E. & Co. can testify,) and for the space of fifteen minutes, would seem to be perfectly oblivious of everything around him. One day my idle curiosity led me to watch the direction of his eyes, as he held a book before his face. They were perfectly stationary. Thus he remained several minutes, when he took a pencil from his pocket and began to cover the margin with his figures.

"Joseph," said I, interrupting him, "you'll spoil that book; here's a bit of paper, if you wish to make more calculations."

"True, Luke—see if you can get these figures out with a bit of India rubber. I cannot read or do anything else in these dull times. To pass along agreeably, I must have employment—business employment, or I am miserable. Nothing can divert my mind, but matters connected with the store, or—somebody I left behind, at Franklin."

"Then, Joseph, why don't you go and pass your leisure time with her? I can easily manage here, in such dull times as these. But I hope you won't make a match of it for some months yet, when your prospects, will, perhaps, be better defined."

"No," said he; "I am resolved not to marry before the

end of the year—and as it will depend in a great measure upon the success of this establishment, whether it can take place even then, you see at once the cause of my anxiety, and the reason why I am 'always figuring,' as you term it. I am racking my brains for a fortune and a wife at the same time."

"I see it all, now," I replied. "And I presume you are just as fidgety in Miss C.'s presence, as you are here. A year is a long time to wait, when both parties are willing; but it cannot be shortened. It might be as well to keep out of sight of the ripe grapes, until you have constructed the ladder which will enable you to reach them."

"I am not quite sure of that," said he, musing. "Somebody else might be tempted to take advantage of my long absence, and succeed in robbing me of the prize. I don't know what misrepresentations might be made. In fact, some scoundrel has already been wicked enough to report that I have been smitten with some one here. But I cannot make up my mind to go, without taking along some certain information in regard to the amount of profits; and I have come to the conclusion that all my calculations amount to nothing more than mere 'guess-work.' There is only one way to get at the true result thus far—"

"You know, Joseph," said I, interrupting him, for I anticipated the onerous undertaking he was about to propose, and wished to avert it—"the amount we have sold—fifteen hundred dollars on credit, and twelve hundred dollars cash—twenty-seven hundred dollars altogether.—Won't it be sufficient to state these facts, at the same time putting down the average profits at about seventy-five per cent., which will not be over the mark?"

"We might, in that way, arrive nigh the true result;"

said he; "but still it would be guessing. I want to take with me a true statement of facts—facts which will be incontrovertible. I know it will be a laborious undertaking to take an account of stock. But it is the only proper way to do business. We have nothing else to do, and that kind of employment will be much better than sheer idleness. It will have the effect to make you more familiar with the quality and the value of the goods, and you can't fail to derive advantage from such knowledge."

I urged one or two more arguments to avoid the threatened labor—and I must confess I had an aversion to anything like unnecessary exertion, and was too apt to argue on the side of my inclinations—but it was useless; the thing had to be done; and so we set about it at once. Joseph was now busy again, and his features were once more animated and cheerful.

At the end of the third day we had finished the job—and the result showed a profit, so far, of twelve hundred dollars. This was satisfactory to Joseph. The only thing wanting to make the result absolutely certain, was a knowledge of the amount of the debts that would ultimately prove to be "bad." This knowledge could not be supplied. The debts were not due, or Joseph would have sent me out to demand payment. This he could not do, and so I defied his restless mind and inventive genius to devise any more unnecessary labor for me.

There was nothing left for Joseph to do, now, but to visit his lady-love, which he did. The dull time continued, the sales averaging not more than one hundred dollars per week. A steamboat arrived only about once every fortnight, which served but little to relieve the monotony of the scene. There were but three boats running on the

river. Now there are forty, and there are daily arrivals and departures.

I amused myself by exploring the primeval wilds of the vicinity. Early in the morning, before any one came to town, (it was always called a town,) and in the evening, when all had departed, I was in the habit of locking the door, and making solitary rambles with my rifle on my shoulder. In the immediate vicinity of the river, there was a succession of hills and valleys. But on going a mile back in the interior, the country became level. The plain was beautifully interspersed with groves and small prairies between; but was occasionally marred by small lakes or ponds, covered near the margin with the broad-leaved water-lily, and in the centre, with an ominous "green scum." Nevertheless, I loved to linger in the neighborhood of these bodies of water, and gaze upon the rank vegetation and rich flowers that fringed them. Unlike Joseph, it required no painful effort for me to dismiss the cares of business from my mind. On the other hand, I was too often absorbed with the visionary creations of the brain. Instead of merely seeking relief from the dull routine of the store, by indulging romantic fancies, I too frequently felt a reluctance and disgust on being called upon to step aside from my cherished ideal regions, to sell a pair of coarse shoes to a big negro fellow! But even that was not repugnant to the eyes of any "fashionable society" in those regions; and when I reflected, as I was often under the necessity of doing, that I was utterly destitute of fortune, and was pursuing an honest means of making a support, I made a shift to "grin and bear it." I alone was to blame for permitting my ideas to make such exalted flights, and richly merited the mortification I felt on having them rudely thrust down to earth again.

Joseph protracted his visit several weeks, and in the meantime I managed to amuse myself during his absence. The comparative suspension of business had no horrors for me, aside from the thoughts of ultimate success, which depended upon the realization of good profits and a liberal amount of sales. But such thoughts did not trouble my mind a great deal. On the contrary, without reflecting on the expense, I consumed nearly a keg of Dupont's best powder, to say nothing of the lead, during my brother's absence, in firing my rifle at a target. I became an excellent marksman, and took pleasure in exhibiting my skill to the old deer hunters. I also fished in the muddy river, where nothing could be caught but huge catfish. One, that I succeeded in bringing to the shore, weighed more than a hundred pounds. I have related this fact to eastern men who doubted its correctness. But any western merchant will be my witness of its truth. I have heard of some being caught that weighed two hundred pounds.

But I had other enjoyments. Fruits and melons grew in great abundance, and were delicious. No country produces them in greater perfection. Of course they were brought me every day, even without the trouble of asking for them. As I have said, the merchant in a new country is a kind of lord, and everything that is good and desirable is at his service. I did not spare these luxuries—nor did they spare me. What with my early and late rambles to the putrescent lakes, in the heavy dews, and the immense consumption of melons, peaches, plums, &c., in which I indulged, I soon found myself a victim to the prevailing disease of the country.

The western merchants are pretty generally conversant with all the symptoms of the ague and fever; but there *may be others, designing* to emigrate, who would like to

learn something specific about them in advance. I do not know that I am capable of giving an intelligible diagnosis to the uninitiated reader; but he will doubtless be enabled fully to recognize my description, when his time shall come to have a shake or two himself.

It was a cool cloudy morning. I remember *that* distinctly. I rose with a dull, languid feeling, lazily opening the door and window-shutter. I reluctantly swept the floor, with a feeling of weariness and disgust of life. I ate but little that morning, and returned gaping, and stretching my arms, to the store. There was a dull pain in my head, and along my back-bone. My shoulder-blades every few minutes seemed inclined to flap together, like a pigeon's wings. I tried to read; but could not succeed. Presently Mr. White came in.

"Why, Luke," said he, "it's coming on sooner than I thought it would. When you left the breakfast table this morning, I said to the girls, he's going to have a touch of the ague, and I'll go over to the store to witness the sport. But I did not suppose it would come on for an hour or so."

I described my feelings to him, and he said they were the invariable precursors of the "shakes."

"But," said I, "surely *this* kind of illness is not regarded as a matter of *sport*, in this country!"

"It is, in a measure," said he. "When I had it, they laughed at me, instead of sympathizing with me. Almost every one has it the first season of his abode here; but it is easily cured. Everybody has a prescription for it. Mine is calomel, antimonial wine, and Peruvian bark. Every one that comes to the store will prescribe a remedy, and no two of them will be alike. Mine, I know, is infallible, provided you take care of yourself afterwards. You must discontinue your lonely rambles about the green

ponds, particularly when there are dews or fogs. You must quit eating melons; and you must not indulge your appetite to the full extent on the intermediate days between the chills. You must ——"

"Ah!" said I, yawning dreadfully, "I am quivering all over now." My teeth clapped together somewhat like the vibrations produced by a dray, running over a rough pavement! "I am shivering in every limb. Look at my hands!"

My fingers were purple under the nails, and my hands were as unsteady as those of an octogenarian stricken with palsy. Mr. White arranged me a pallet of blankets on the counter, and I laid down. It now seemed to me that I could feel, and almost hear, my bones grating each other at the joints.

"Please put more blankets on me, Mr. White!" I exclaimed, in tones nearly inarticulate from internal agitation. He continued to heap them on me, until the whole stock in trade was brought in requisition. There were twenty odd pairs of heavy Mackinaw blankets piled up on me; but still my earthquake of an ague made that mountain of wool shake from one end to the other. I was in great agony!

"Bear it like a man, Luke," said Mr. White; "the first fit is the worst. After one or two shakes you'll get used to it, and not mind it much."

"I—I—ll ne—ver ge—t us—ed to any—thing li—ke th—is!" I replied, with difficulty, my teeth chattering violently.

"Yes you will," continued Mr. White. "If I had known that the ague was coming on so soon, I would have brought with me the antimonial wine. It should be taken before the spasm seizes you. Day after to-morrow you will have another fit of it, and then you will take time by the forelock. But you must take calomel to-morrow

The reader may, perhaps, form some slight idea of my feelings as I lay there, the victim of that cruel disease, compelled to listen to such cool remarks, and to behold the quiet smile on the lips of my benevolent tormentor—for Mr. White was one of the kindest men in the world.

Mr. White continued: "Nobody thinks of sending for a doctor in this country, until they fear they are past recovery, and such being the case, such patients rarely do recover. Almost always when the doctor is sent for, he is followed by the carpenter, to make the coffin. But this does not often occur in simple cases of fever and ague, like yours. You need not fear any serious consequences, if you will only follow my advice. Every person will tell you, you must take calomel, and there is a universal measure for the dose, which I must guard you against. When I had my first ague, there being no apothecary's scales convenient, I was informed that the custom of the country was to *measure* the dose, not weigh it. They said one must dip his pocket-knife in the mineral and swallow as much as would lie on the end of it, and this they will tell you—but you must not heed them. The only pocket-knife I carried at that time was one with a broad blade, for the purpose of pruning fruit trees. I suppose it would have held about an ounce and a half, which would have physicked an elephant. And I have no doubt I have seen seventy grains administered thus. I have seen hunters in the woods take calomel from the end of their butcher knives, which they used in cutting the throats of the deer they had shot down. But so far from killing those hardy men, after lying down among the dry leaves a few minutes, while the ague was on them, they would rise again and continue the hunt. But your constitution would not bear it, nor mine. So when I went to the land office to enter the bit

of ground over yonder, I got an apothecary to weigh me twenty grains of calomel, and when I returned, I purchased a knife having a blade just of the right size to hold the proper dose. With this knife, which I will leave with you, I have measured more than a hundred doses for the neighbors. No doubt, if you can find any knives in your stock of the same dimensions, you can sell them for any price you please. I have been offered five dollars for this one."

"Give me a drink of water, if you please, Mr. White!" I exclaimed, and at the same time began to kick off the blankets. The fever, which invariably succeeds the ague, then came on, and I felt as one with hot lava injected into his veins. In vain Mr. White expostulated with me, and warned me that the more water I drank, the more violent would be the fever. I emptied the pitcher into my stomach, and implored him to fetch me more. This he would not do; and my fever increasing, I talked incessantly of cool shades and clear brooks.

"When I get out," said I, "I'll show you whether or not I'll have water. I'll strip myself, and plunge into the pool at the spring. I'll lie for an hour with my mouth open, and drink the cold fresh water as it gurgles from the rock."

"If you do," said he, "the very next hour the neighbors will be holding an inquest over your body."

"Pshaw!" I replied, half conscious of my raging nonsense, "you know I will do no such foolish thing. But it is refreshing to think and talk about the cold water at the spring."

Mr. White remained with me about three hours. At the expiration of that time, he made the joyful discovery of a slight moisture in the palms of my hands. It was no

long before the fever subsided, and I got up, very giddy and very weak, but very cheerful. I had once expressed a silly desire to have a touch of the ague, and now recollected having joined the merriment at the expense of those who were troubled with the disease. Indeed I had become so much accustomed to hear the ague spoken of lightly and contemptuously, that I really fancied there was nothing in it to be seriously dreaded. I had now found out my mistake; but notwithstanding, as it seemed to be the custom of the country, I, too, affected to regard it indifferently.

Towards evening, to show my hardihood, I walked out as usual with my gun on my shoulder, and killed a young rabbit for food for a young wolf which had been given me, and which I foolishly thought could be domesticated, and taught to follow his master like a dog.

On the day that had been appointed by Mr. W., I felt the premonitory symptoms, sure enough. The calomel had been taken on the intermediate day, and the antimonial wine was in readiness. I had never taken any medicine before, save, perhaps, oil and paregoric in the nursery; and as the dreaded calomel had not proved so "bad to take," nor so violent in its effects, as I anticipated, I rather increased than diminished the dose of antimony, as it was made pleasant to the taste, always excepting the "farewell twang." I was wholly ignorant of the mode of its operation; and Mr. W. had not deemed it proper to inform me. I had incidentally remarked in his presence that I could bear any fits but vomiting fits, which always came nigh killing me. After that information I could not but wonder why he should insist on administering the antimony. But he deemed it necessary; and he was present, and saw me take it. He was silent when I intimated that

it had done me good, and made me feel rather better. He awaited the time—and it shortly came. Presently I complained of a sick stomach, and grew alarmed, as this was a new symptom. Mr. W. said nothing. At length his assistance was required, and was promptly given, in silence.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, during a short "breathing spell," "this is what I have always dreaded most! It will kill me, I fear. Give me any other kind of illness but this!"

"You will be better, presently," remarked Mr. W., with great confidence. "This is no new thing. It is always so with me when I have the ague."

"I hope I shall not burst a blood-vessel!" said, I during another brief interval. "I have long ago made up my mind never to permit a physician to give me an emetic—and if one ever does, it will be good policy in him not to let me survive it!"

Mr. White said not a word. I had but a slight chill that day, and not much fever afterwards. Mr. White informed me at the tea-table that the charm was broken; and that I would have no return of the ague, if I followed his advice. It was true. There was no return of the malady on the regular day, nor until I disregarded the injunctions of my friend.

CHAPTER V.

At the beginning of autumn, business revived, and the success of the establishment was placed beyond a doubt. *The emigrants from* the slave-holding states came out in

large numbers in the fall. All of them brought more or less money with them, upon which to subsist until they could make a support for themselves. They had to buy all the food and clothing they consumed the first months of their abode in the country. Those who had preceded them furnished the articles. Thus a constant trade was kept up among themselves. There were no exports. But as there were ten thousand things, in the way of merchandize, not brought with the emigrants, and yet indispensable to their convenience, it followed that the merchant did a flourishing business. At the present day, I presume the state of Missouri, and the neighboring states, export as much in value as they import. Their supplies of tobacco, hemp, wheat, corn, live-stock, meat, &c., seem now to be inexhaustible—to say nothing of their minerals. But the cash finds its way into the desk of the merchant, as it did formerly.

Joseph was delighted with his success; but his restless mind was ever on the wing. Although his ambition impelled him to resolve to be the pioneer, the leader, the most successful member of the family, yet he was desirous that the rest of us should follow in his footsteps, at a respectful distance behind. One night, when we were sitting as usual at the door, enjoying the fine breeze which swept gently up the river, he said:

"Luke, how would you like to commence doing business for yourself? Our family is numerous, and all of us poor. Those of us who are old enough, should embrace every opportunity to make all the money we can, in an honest way. Nothing but energy, honesty and perseverance is required to succeed in a new country. Our parents are *getting old, and* several of the children are yet too young *to assist them.* We must strain every fibre to be enabled

to help them along. You see the necessity of dropping all ideas except those of business."

"I like the idea very well," I replied; "but I don't see how it can be accomplished. I have no capital, and you are about to increase your expenses."

"You are mistaken, Luke. By marrying I will rather diminish my expenses. My wife's fortune will be equal to my own. Neither of them is much, but the little we have being united, will enable us to get along without additional expense. Besides, when I am settled down permanently, my credit and standing will be better established. My business qualifications are known to the merchants in this region—and I have no fears for myself. If I continue to have health, I will soon achieve a fortune. I have had propositions from a half dozen men of capital already, to enter into partnership with them at the expiration of my present engagement. It will be the same with you, if you prove capable. A young man of good character, and of business capacity, will not long want for capital in a new country. But he must be steadfast, energetic, and never *ashamed* of small beginnings."

I felt Joseph's rebuke, and assented to its justness. He had more than once detected my reluctance to attend to some of the minor details of the business.

"But," said I, curious to know how I might begin operations on my own account, "in what way do you propose that I shall commence business for myself?"

"In a very small way," said he; "but if you think it too small, you can let it alone. It would be a beginning, without much risk; and it might put a few hundred dollars in your pocket. It would at all events test your capacity for business, and exercise your genius in that line, if you *have any. But I'm* afraid your notions are too high for

such small matters. You have too much pride, Luke, I'm afraid, to succeed in business. A young man in your destitute condition, if he means to rise in the world, should hesitate at no honest undertaking to make a living."

"But tell me what it is you propose," said I, growing impatient; "there is but one thing that I would object to embarking in; and if it be that, I must refuse."

"What is it you allude to?" he asked.

"Selling liquor—keeping a tippling shop," said I, with some emphasis.

"It is not that, Luke," said he; "I have too much pride myself—no, not pride, if such a thing were necessary and not morally wrong—but sense of propriety, to propose that. This is what I mean. You get a salary of one hundred and twenty dollars, and your board. You have been tolerably economical in the way of clothing, and only shown a little extravagance in the purchase of a gun, and some pets; (I had, besides my wolf, a squirrel and a fawn;) and I find there are now about fifty dollars to your credit. Instead of taking that sum in return for the money I loaned you in Kentucky, I will just charge you the interest at present, and permit you to have the principal to speculate on in racoon skins, and other peltry. No doubt if you write advertisements, stating that you will purchase such articles, you will make a considerable trade."

"The *coon* trade!" ejaculated I, laughing.

"Oh, if you don't like the idea, you need have nothing to do with it. *I* will engage in it myself," he continued, as he perceived something like a sneer in my manner.

"I haven't said I don't like it," I replied. "I was only amused at the idea. Indeed I do like it very well, *and hope to* make something out of it. But I can't expect *to make much on* a capital of fifty dollars. However, if

the profits be ever so small, still the sum realized will be better than nothing; and it will be a beginning, as you say. But what if I lose?"

"You *can't* lose," replied he, firmly. "If you only *determine* to make money, you will succeed—that is my motto. But I will make by it, too. You must pay for your peltry in goods, and charge yourself with the amount. If this overruns the sum due you on the books, more will be still accruing to your credit from your salary. It will teach you habits of economy and calculation, which will be of infinite benefit. If you should run up the account to several hundred dollars, *I* will make no objection; and presume my partners will make none, as the debt will be liquidated when you get returns from your shipments to St. Louis."

I now caught at the idea with eagerness, and began to calculate rather too fast for Joseph. It had been originally agreed, that any merchandise charged to my account, should be put at the rate of only twenty-five per cent. profit, and I suggested that I should have the advantage of a deduction on the goods I sold in exchange for furs, at the usual prices, to that extent. Joseph was pleased at this evidence of my penetration, but objected positively to the arrangement, reminding me that in truth, the capital I was to operate on, was not my own, as I owed it all to him—and furthermore, that the moderate profit alluded to, was only intended to be applied to articles for my own use.

With a sigh at the disadvantages under which circumstances compelled me to operate, I was, nevertheless, pleased with the novelty of the undertaking, and so I entered with a degree of cheerfulness and hope upon my new career. It was a kind of by-play in the scene—a sort of *imperium in imperio*, as the great politicians at Washington would say—and afforded a new diversion for the

mind. It led me to read again many tales of great results growing out of small beginnings, and was a useful lesson in lessening my pride, which had been engendered in great part from the incredible number of fashionable romances I had read.

In a few weeks, I had the lumber room and two "lofts" pretty well filled with coon skins, otter, muskrat, &c. The store smelt like a hatter's shop, and Joseph sometimes evinced his displeasure at the odor. I had gone the full extent of his limits, and in the event of my failure in business, he began to see that the firm of J. Shortfield & Co. might be involved in my fall. So he put a veto upon any farther proceedings, until I had made a shipment and got my returns. He said my liabilities were already too far extended, and it was time to begin to "realize." But he had perforce to permit me to extend them a little farther. I bought of him all the empty casks and barrels about the concern, to pack my skins in. It was a tedious process. To say nothing of the "oleaginous" particles on the flesh side of the skins, I discovered with alarm that the moths had begun to play havoc with the other side—and Joseph feared that they might play havoc with the cloths. I spread them all out in the sun, and gave them a good beating before packing them. We then overhauled the woolen goods in the house, and found that no material damage had been done.

At length the day of shipment came. The old "Globe" was puffing and straining to round to at the landing. It was a tedious and difficult operation. The old merchants of Missouri, all remember the "Globe." She could run only about twenty-five miles a day up stream, barring the narrow places and short bends, where the current was unusually rapid. At one of such places, I have seen her

make three ineffectual attempts to "turn a point," and have to fall back and "wood" at the same yard as many times. Then she "made" only five miles a day. She was commanded by Captain Clarke and his wife; but the wife was "more of a man" than the husband, and commanded him, as well as the crew, on many occasions. Still, they made money. They charged two dollars a hundred for freight up to the same places to which goods are now brought for twelve and a half cents. Having first agreed to pay so much per hundred pounds, I rolled my furs down to the natural wharf, which consisted of a bluff bank and a tree to "make fast" to. When the old lady saw the casks beginning to bounce and hop about, indicating their lightness, she began to demur to the agreement. But it was too late—I carried the day, got my bills of lading signed, and saw my first lot of produce leave the harbor.

During the succeeding two weeks, my thoughts were pretty much occupied with speculations on the probable result of my venture. I dreamed of most astonishing profits at night; and was eager, on the succeeding day, to continue my purchases. But Joseph positively forbade it. I had no remedy but to tell the trappers and hunters to await the result of my shipment. I ran no risk of losing the business. I had a complete monopoly of the "coon trade."

At the expiration of three weeks, a letter came to hand from the commission merchant to whom the consignment had been made. It was brought up by the "Otto," a new boat, and the fastest one that had been hitherto on the river. The letter was dated only four days back. Joseph received it, he having gone down to the landing while I remained at the store waiting on some customers. When

he returned, I saw that his eyes sparkled, and knew that he had good news for me.

"Luke, what will you take for your profits?" said he, holding the open letter in his hand.

"One hundred dollars, at a venture," said I.

"You have done better than that," said he, placing the letter in my hand.

And, sure enough, I had done better. The whole consignment had cost me, including the barrels, just four hundred and sixty dollars, six and a quarter cents. The net proceeds of sales were eight hundred and twenty-nine dollars, ninety-three and three quarter cents! And that amount remained in the hands of Messrs. Tracy & Co., subject to my order. I had cleared by the operation three hundred and sixty-nine dollars, eighty-seven and a half cents! It was with difficulty I could comprehend the extent of my good fortune, at first. The amount appeared so large, that I feared there might be some mistake. I was so imprudent as to read the letter over and over again, aloud, disregardful of my brother's prudential hints to be silent. Finally, I became convinced of the reality of my acquisition, and determined to lose no time in resuming my operations in the "coon trade." My next thought was to write a letter to Blanche, apprising her of my prospects, which I did in glowing terms.

But I found, to my dismay, that the "coon trade" was over. The prices in St. Louis were soon known all over the country, and there were dozens of speculators in the field. I could not afford to give the prices the people now asked; and Joseph did not suggest any other speculation for me. In truth, it was ascertained that my speculations "*on my own hook*" were occupying too much of my attention, and threatened to be detrimental to the interest of

my employers; and so Joseph did not exhibit much sorrow in my behalf on account of this disappointment.

The time was now arrived for us to begin to make collections for the first goods sold on credit, and I was likely to have employment enough. After making out the bills, which I found to be a most tedious labor, Joseph mounted me on a horse and started me into the interior. He urged me to be diligent, stating that upon my success depended in a great measure his future welfare and mine. He said that if the establishment could realize the amount of money that the first importation of goods had cost in Philadelphia, his partners would permit him to go east in the winter, and purchase his next stock himself. I was fully impressed with the importance of my mission, and resolved to do my best. But by way of securing my personal safety, as I alleged, though in reality to promote my amusement, by mingling sport with business, I insisted on carrying my rifle with me, which Joseph reluctantly permitted.

An hour's ride sufficed to place me in the beautiful prairie—not an unrelieved, cheerless plain of interminable extent, as many suppose the prairies of Missouri to be; but a series of gentle slopes bounded by parallel ravines. On either side of these ravines were beautiful groves of oak, spreading a half mile in width, and extending miles in length. Thus only about two-thirds of the land consisted of prairie, and a fair proportion of the travel was under the grateful branches of umbrageous trees. Here nature seemed to invite the industrious man to partake of her richest bounties. He had only to till the virgin soil, laid off in fields and hedges ready for him, and then to reap an abundant harvest. Every portion of the country that I saw in cultivation, brought forth at least fifty-fold.

The reader may be assured that I am not describing

the mere creations of the imagination. My object is to convey accurate information. Even my incidents are not falsely colored. I state the bad as well as the good of a new country—and I trust that I shall be believed; and farther, if the good shall be thought to preponderate, and if a portion of those whose circumstances may require a change of location, shall be induced by a perusal of these pages to take up their abode in the lovely clime of the west, I will be conscious of having done a service to some of my fellow-creatures. Missouri is one of the largest states in the Union; and there are portions of it, far up the river, now being settled, which afford all the inducements that the central region presented eighteen years ago. There is one false idea especially in regard to the first inhabitants of the western states, which should be corrected. The belief is quite prevalent that because the habitations of the emigrants are rude, and the comforts and conveniences of civilization necessarily much restricted, the intelligence and morals of the people must correspond. This is the reverse of the truth. With the exception of the few desperate and abandoned creatures who always flee from justice to the verge of civilization, the population of those new settlements is composed, for the most part, of people of great natural energy of character—who have, besides, more than a moderate share of wise penetration. These people foresee the benefits that will ultimately be realized by their children as the country grows older, and as property, both real and personal, augments in value, and they have the courage and perseverance to contend for the prize. Besides, they bring with them a variety of useful information from the respective states and localities they have abandoned, and by their unrestrained intercourse with each other, by their inter-

change of sentiment, they acquire an amount of varied intelligence, on all subjects of moment, which may be vainly looked for in the more secluded portions of the comparatively densely populated states of the north and east. And in regard to genuine piety, and the true charities of life, an equal proportion of them fall not a whit behind their brethren in the old states. It is true that occasionally some characters are found, such as I have hinted at, who put all the precepts of religion at defiance, and disregard all the proprieties and decencies of good neighborhood; but such vicious persons are speedily rooted out by the good sense of the well disposed portion of the community as soon as their numbers grow sufficiently ample for the purpose. It was so with the representative of the county, Mr. Beckel. So soon as he ascertained that a majority of the voters were disposed to evince at the polls their condemnation of his loose morals, he sold his property and took up his abode in Texas.

At the point where the smooth prairie road which I was traversing, entered a dense grove, through the centre of which ran a large rivulet of cool transparent water, I espied, some fifty paces ahead, my enemy, the desperate Irishman. He was seated quietly on his horse, which was standing in the water, with his mouth thrust in the brook, and his tail switching violently at the flies, which are generally a great annoyance in all new countries. The Irishman had his rifle on his shoulder. A cold chill ran up my back as he raised his head and recognized me. His brow was dark, and he gazed steadfastly at me. I was now within twenty paces of him. It would not do to turn and flee away. I frankly confess I had the disposition to do so, and would certainly have avoided him, if he had

not seen me. But now it was too late. I had to brave it out, although every fibre in me tingled with fear. I was a famous shot. Every body for twenty, yes, forty miles round, had heard of my extraordinary skill with the rifle; and fortunately my rifle was in my hand. Having made up my mind that there was no alternative but to meet my deadly foe in that narrow road, (it was just wide enough for a wagon to pass, and on either side there was a dense, impenetrable undergrowth of briers, bushes, and tangled grape vines,) my subsequent conduct was the result of an unerring instinct which had more than once extricated me in moments of sudden peril. I checked my horse and dismounted, and pretended to adjust my girth. But I so arranged the animal—(apparently by accident, though in reality altogether by design)—that while there should be ample room for my adversary to pass, his body should at the same time be interposed between us. I kept my eye fixed on the Irishman, and my rifle at rest on my left arm, while I held the breech and lock in my right hand. My foe did not seem to have any inclination, on his part, to turn and fly. But he *hesitated*, when his horse was done drinking. He had once received a blow from my hand which had well nigh sufficed him. Perhaps he was speculating about the chances of receiving farther injury, rather than meditating vengeance. This idea occurred to me, and caused me to act with more decision. I would have been justified had I killed him, for it was notorious that he still threatened to take my life. But I had no such intention. My purpose was only to escape with an unperforated skin. Assuming as much fierceness as possible, I compressed my lips, and kept my *eye fixed upon* his. At length he touched his horse *with the spur*, and advanced very slowly. His gun was

still on his shoulder, but his hand was on the lock and guard. When he was within five steps of me, he heard the click of my lock as I set the trigger. He paused an instant. His gaze became unsteady, and his head hung down a little, so that his broadbrimmed palm leaf hat almost obscured his eyes. I saw that he was pale, and that the hand which held the reins trembled. I was convinced he was as much of a coward as myself; but I knew he was a dangerous man, and would shoot me in the back if he should get the opportunity.

"What are you going to do?" he finally asked, in a squeaking, tremulous tone. I was afraid to speak myself. I *felt* that I could not do it without betraying great agitation and alarm. So I merely responded by a motion of the head for him to pass on his way.

"Do you intend to shoot?" continued he. Again I made a motion for him to pass, and this time with more energy and impatience. He now looked me imploringly in the face. It did not require language to express more audibly his hope that I would not shoot him in the back when he had passed. He was capable of doing such a thing himself, but had sufficient knowledge of human nature to suppose that I would be incapable of perpetrating so base an act. So he rode on, very slowly, with his face turned towards me. As he rubbed by, I turned too, by degrees, so as to watch all his motions. He still did not dare to shift the rifle from his shoulder, knowing that such a movement would be the signal for me to fire, and I was in the best attitude to fire first, and with the most precision. Now I had resolved not to fire at all. I had no intention of taking his life. And I was satisfied that if I once discharged my gun, without fatal effect, I would have no *chance of escape.* Hence I had determined, the instant

I perceived his purpose to precipitate a strife, to plunge into the bushes and hide myself, convinced that he would abandon the ground the moment I was concealed from his view, as I would then have it in my power to fire upon him from a covert. I thought, besides, I would have a better chance to escape his aim in the bushes. The woodman will never follow the rattlesnake into a thicket. But I was no serpent, and there was no necessity for me to put my project into execution. He passed on, and as he advanced, he mended his gait. When he was fifty yards off, he spurred his horse into a brisk trot. I was not yet quite out of danger, knowing well the capabilities of the rifle; and so I maintained my position until he was one hundred and fifty yards distant, and hidden from view by a turn in the road. Then, for the first time, I recollected that my rifle was not loaded! I was almost prostrated with the sudden shock produced by this consciousness. It is true I had not pictured to my mind the contingency which would have induced me to fire. But there *was* such a contingency, and I knew it, although I would not think of it. The "little bit of lead," which I had supposed was in my rifle, was my only reliance in a final struggle. And now I remembered that my gun was empty.

I sprang upon my horse, dashed through the brook at a gallop, and never paused until I was a quarter of a mile out in the prairie on the opposite side. Then I dismounted, trembling like an aspen leaf, and too feeble and unsteady to stand. My fears brought on a slight fit of the ague; and after I had, with great difficulty, succeeded in charging my rifle, I lay down on my saddle blanket until the fever which followed the chill had in a measure subsided.

I was roused by the sound of a horse's tramp approach-

ing. I looked up, and perceived a female riding towards me at a rapid rate.

"What's the matter with you there? Why, is it you, dear Luke?" exclaimed she, checking her panting horse suddenly, and leaping to the ground. The horse began to graze about with mine (most of the horses were trained never to leave their riders when suffered to go loose in the prairie, and even to follow, should their masters wander away), while the girl stood at my side. It was Polly Beckel, whom I dreaded to meet almost as much as the Irishman. But she had no rifle, and she did not look revengeful. Nevertheless, she knew how to use fire-arms; so I instinctively threw out the priming from my lock.

"What's the matter, Luke?" she continued, seating herself beside me on the grass.

"I had a slight chill—that's all," said I.

"Let me see," said she, feeling my pulse. "You have a little fever—though not much."

"But I have pretty much of a headache," said I, "and must get out of this hot sun, or it will get worse."

"Well, come along with me, Luke; we have some 'bitters' at our house that will cure you."

"No," said I, firmly. "I am riding on business which must be attended to."

"Pshaw, Luke! don't be afraid of me—I won't hurt you. You mustn't mind my nonsense at the store. I was in a kind of girlish spree then, and determined to do something that would be talked about, and laughed at."

"I hope you don't think it could be possible for me to be afraid of you, or any woman?" said I, coolly and deliberately.

"No, not actually afraid of me," said she, with a very *commendable seriousness*—for indeed her tone and man-

ner were more subdued than I had witnessed them before —"but *shy*, or backward to participate in my fun and frolic, when I am in the humor. If you had romped boldly with me, of course you would have triumphed. I never go beyond a certain extent with the men, and have more than once been under the necessity of repulsing their rudeness. My father has brought me up badly—but my mother fortunately succeeded in counteracting his bad breeding in some degree. You never hear anything said about me worse than what you have seen." I thought that bad enough. But it was true there were no other imputations on her character, and she had given the right version of her qualities.

Remembering that I had a bill against her father, I told her I would visit her house the next day, but that now I must insist on parting from her, as I had to stop at a dwelling not so far off, where I had business, and where I would be able to get relief.

That dwelling was Mr. Middletown's. Mr. M., contrary to his usual custom, had been induced to run up a liberal account with us, and had recently intimated that he would be ready with the money whenever I might see proper to call for it.

"Oh yes!" cried she, laughing, as she sprang with immense agility on her horse. "I understand; you are going down there to be nursed by Miss Maria. I heard the other day that she says you made the tender of your hand to her first, and that she has neither accepted nor declined it yet, but still keeps the proposition under consideration. You are going, perhaps, to hear her decision?"

"No, indeed," said I; "I feel like anything else than a lover, now; and besides, to tell you the plain truth, I left my sweetheart behind me, when I came to Missouri."

"Hum, that's not an unusual case. You left her behind, and so far behind, that the poor thing will never catch up with you. But what kind of a looking girl is she?"

"Beautiful, of course," said I. "She is tall, with gray eyes, long black hair, rather dark skin, and good teeth."

"Ha, ha, ha! Then she is left behind for good. But remember, if you think to marry Maria, I give you warning that I will have you proceeded against for bigamy. It would be best for you to get a divorce from me—you know it is easily done in Missouri."

"Ha, ha! But now, in solemn earnestness," said I, laughing in my turn, "will you really take me for better, for worse, &c.?"

"Do you mean that as a serious proposition?" said she, looking archly over her shoulder, as her horse moved slowly away.

I said nothing, but watched the mischievous expression of her countenance.

"If you do," she continued, "I tell you plainly that I will; and if you don't, I sha'n't care a fig. I can enjoy myself in my own way, as I have always done, free as the air, without being yoked with a husband. But this is all folly. I know I wouldn't suit you; and if we were to be married (as we came very nigh being once), you would be getting a divorce in a year or two. Good-by."

And so we parted. I rode on to Mr. Middletown's, where I had a hearty welcome, and every attention that could be devised to alleviate my aching head. When the sun went down, the pain subsided, and then I related the particulars of my encounter with the Irishman. They all listened with concern, and more especially Miss Maria. It is so with the young and innocent; they take a more lively interest in the dangers and woes of others than those

grown callous with age. I could see the color "come and go" in her fair face, as I told my story; and when the danger was past, she made no effort to conceal her satisfaction. But when I proceeded to narrate the particulars of the succeeding encounter, she did not evince by her looks or speech any pleasure. On the contrary, Miss Polly received on that occasion a most unmerciful castigation from the tongue of the modest and pretty Miss Middletown, and her parents united with her in censuring the wild girl.

Mr. Middletown not only paid me the amount of his account in money, but he entertained me like a lord. He was one of the earliest settlers in the country, and had by this time every comfort about him that he had enjoyed in Virginia. He had built a commodious brick house, (one of his negro men being a mason and another a carpenter,) without having to expend any money in its erection, except for window glass, nails, locks, and such small articles. He had a good horse-mill erected in the same manner, to say nothing of his ample barn, stables, cider-press, &c. His farm, consisting of about a thousand acres, and which had cost him originally only $1250 ($1 25 per acre), was nearly equally divided between prairie and timber land. The former was now well enclosed and in a high state of cultivation. It was laid off in beautiful square fields of corn, wheat, oats, hemp, tobacco, flax, &c., and each yielded an abundant crop, for the soil and climate of Missouri are eminently adapted to the growth of them all. He had extensive orchards, apple, peach, and cherry, besides pear and plum trees, and grape vines, distributed in profusion in the ample garden, in the yard, and along the fence rows. Then beyond the fields, in the prairie, there were nigh a hundred head of fat cattle grazing, all in full view; beyond these were some fifteen or twenty mares and colts, the latter

frisking and prancing about. Sheep there were none in the prairie, and only a few dozen in the immediate neighborhood of the house, and even there the wolves would sometimes assail them. But the swine were literally innumerable, for they had increased so rapidly, as he said, that he could not keep a correct account of their number. Then the immense congregation of poultry! This was the peculiar property of Mrs. M. and Maria. Such flocks of turkeys, geese, ducks, and chickens, I had never beheld anywhere else. The old lady told me that her negroes had chickens and eggs, fresh butter and milk, and the best of bacon in abundance, to say nothing of an endless amount of honey, every day of the year, and they seemed to be truly contented with their lot. I have dwelt more particularly on the condition of this well-conducted farm, inasmuch as I have learned that the produce sent from it to market annually, at a subsequent period, after retaining sufficient for the subsistence of the family, amounted, when turned into hard money, to $1500. And this was only one among ten thousand. Yet there are twenty thousand others, destined to run the same glorious career of transformation from a state of unproductive wilderness to a blooming Eden. But two days' travel in one of the fine steamers now plying those waters, will bring one to other lands of equal value and beauty, and which may be had for one dollar and a quarter per acre. And yet they are settled but slowly. The acquisition of Texas, California and Oregon has tended to retard the progress of civilization nearer home. Men are running mad with ideas of wealth and happiness, inconsiderately promised them in those distant and almost inaccessible regions, which are never to be realized. Long trains of emigrant wagons, with women and helpless children, may now be seen every year toiling their weary way

through the rich and inviting unoccupied lands of Missouri, to seek an abode in those distant provinces. Should they be so fortunate as to arrive at the point of their destination, there are no means, or very inadequate ones, of sending their products to market. Whereas, on the Missouri river, the farmer is about as nigh to New Orleans as the growers of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Indiana. From the farthest settlements up the river, steamers run down in three or four days to St. Louis, and in about as many more to New Orleans. The lands on the Ohio river are worth from forty to sixty dollars per acre—in Missouri, *improved* lands can be bought for five dollars. An active competition must inevitably graduate this enormous disparity in value, like spreading water, to an equable and natural level.

When about to set out the next morning, after a rich warm breakfast, and entirely relieved of all the effects of my excitement and illness of the previous day, one of Mr. Middletown's sons, a youth of ten years, seeing my rifle, told me that he had seen a fine buck, about half a mile distant, grazing in the prairie within fifty yards of the timber. Maria, from whom I had already taken leave, but who was now sitting at an upper window, cried out, "Yonder's the deer; I can see him distinctly from this window. I will watch him while you creep up and shoot him."

I determined to exhibit to Miss Maria a specimen of my skill as a marksman, and set off in a cautious manner in the direction of the deer, accompanied by Mr. M. and his son. When we had followed a narrow path through the bushes which grew out some fifty paces beyond the timber to within two hundred paces of the deer, I dismounted, and Mr. M. held my horse, while his son proposed to guide me through the dense undergrowth to the spot from which

I was to fire. This was a tuft of high grass detached a few feet from the bushes, where Mr. M. could see me and the deer at the same time, and participate in the sport. Master Peyton preceded me, and we commenced our approach on our hands and knees. When we got within fifty paces of the spot from which I was to fire, I became entangled in the vines, and had to use my knife to cut myself loose. Master Peyton grew very impatient, fearing the buck would "scent us," and run away. He, being smaller than I, had got through without difficulty, and did not seem to take my superior dimensions into consideration. He was only intent on seeing the buck bite the dust, for the occasional glimpses we had of him showed he was still biting the grass very unsuspectingly. At length I became extricated, and continued to follow Master Peyton's lead. Finally we arrived at the edge of the thicket. Here Master Peyton paused, without removing his gaze from the deer, while I crept out to the appointed tuft of high grass. I viewed the noble buck with admiration, resting on my knees and hands. I turned and saw that Master Peyton's eyes grew larger and larger, and were fixed immovably on the buck. I looked beyond, and saw Mr. Middletown stamping with impatience, and making gestures for me to fire. The buck lifted his head and snuffed the breeze. He pricked up his ears and distended his nostrils, as if fearful of some lurking danger.

"*Shoot, Luke, or give up the gun!*" shouted Mr. Middletown. I had no gun. I had left it among the grape vines, where I had put it down to get the knife out of my pocket, and in my intense anxiety to reach the tuft of high grass, had forgotten to bring it along. I felt mortified beyond description. The eyes of all, even the beautiful blue *ones of Miss Maria*, were on the scene.

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"Shoot, Luke, or give up the gun to Peyton!" again shouted Mr. Middletown. His first cry had attracted the attention of the buck in that direction. But this time he heard a sound not so distant.

"He's going to run, Mr. Shortfield! Shoot quick!" said Master Peyton. He did run. I walked out in the open space and looked at him bound away, without the ability to send a leaden messenger after him.

"Why did you not shoot?" asked Mr. Middletown, who galloped up on my horse.

"I won't tell you," said I, "without you promise never to tell it to any one else."

"Well, I'll promise," said he, smiling, and vainly looking about for my rifle.

"Ha! ha! ha! He left it in the bushes—he left his gun behind!" exclaimed Master Peyton—"and crept all the way out here without it!"

"You have promised," said I, very deprecatingly, "not to tell on me. You may say I was in love, sick, forgetful of the proximity of the buck, anything by way of excuse; but if this thing were known in the country, all the old hunters would plague me about it forever after."

"I have promised," said Mr. Middletown, smiling, as we returned slowly in the direction of the house. But Master Peyton had vanished. I caught a brief glimpse of his cap, as he ran across one of the openings in the orchard. In vain we screamed for him to come back; the only response we had was a prolonged shout of laughter from the house, which was repeated from the kitchen as the negroes learned the fact.

I did not go by the house, preferring to make a shorter cut across the prairie, to the main road leading up the country. I parted from my sympathizing host with my

chin on my breast, but had not gone twenty paces before he called me back.

"Luke," said he, "never mind it. All new deer hunters must put up with similar mortifications. You will have more of them before the fall is over, if you hunt any. You will have to endure a fit of *buck ague* before you can kill one. But you must come back—you have forgotten your gun *again*." It was true. I was riding away, leaving my rifle in the bushes. I grew angry with myself, as I turned my horse's head. Mr. Middletown soothed me all he could, saying this forgetfulness only grew out of the confusion of the first. I got my gun, and bidding a hasty good-by to my host, rode off at a gallop.

When I was passing a corner of the most distant field belonging to Mr. Middletown, and still in view of the house, I heard the same buck leaping through the corn. It came towards the corner of the fence. Quickly I sprang from my horse, (which had once been shot through the ear by an unskillful hunter, and would not suffer me to fire from his back,) and throwing the rifle up to my shoulder, waited for the buck to leap over into the prairie. I was now buoyant with hope, and confident of success. It would be a glorious triumph over Master Peyton, to bring down the noble fellow, at the time that he was making game of me for permitting him to escape. I did not wait long. On it came, and springing majestically over the high fence, stopped stock still, in full view, not twenty paces distant, with his broad blue side exposed to my aim. I leveled deliberately, and *snapped*. We used flint guns then. He turned his head and looked me in the face. I trembled, but drew back the cock and—snapped again. The buck leaped on in graceful undulations across the level plain. I snapped at him a third time as he ran,

but to no effect. Then, once more to my utter confusion, I recollected having thrown out the priming on the previous day, to prevent Miss Beckel from doing any mischief, and that I had not replenished it! But now there was no witness to my confusion—at least I hoped no one observed me from the house. And my confusion was only the worse confounded, when I reflected that my disappointment would have been certain in the first instance, even if I had not forgotten my gun in the bushes.

I now strove to banish my mishaps from my mind, (having first primed my gun,) with thoughts of business. I looked over my accounts, and shaped my course for the nighest debtor. That day I dispatched business at a rapid rate, and by the evening, when I approached the house of Mr. Beckel, my pockets were well filled with bank notes and hard dollars.

As I rode up to the fence, I saw more than a dozen young ladies and gentlemen about the premises. Of course I knew them all, and felt "at home" among them. It appeared that Polly, in anticipation of my arrival, had invited the company thither, to have a "jollification" that night. We had an abundant supper, and afterwards a dance to a three-stringed violin—cards, "bitters," and all sorts of country games. That night, for the first time in my life, I had to kiss some of the girls, and my backwardness and awkwardness caused no little merriment. But the amusement was not altogether to my fancy; and, besides, I was weary from my incessant riding that day. The rest of the folks determined to keep up the fun until broad daylight the next morning; but I stole away to rest before midnight. Mrs. Beckel took pity on me, and prepared me a couch on *the floor* of one of the rooms. The house was one of the *second class,* made of hewn logs, and consisting of two

rooms, separated by a wide hall, in which the sports were carried on. This hall was twenty feet long, and fifteen wide, having neither door nor other means of enclosure at the ends. The floor of the hall, as well as of both rooms, was composed of flat hewn timber, several inches thick. The room in which I lay was divided into several small compartments, by temporary partitions, made of quilts suspended from the joists above. I was too drowsy to be particular about the construction of my chamber; and so, after pulling off my boots, coat, and vest, I threw myself down on the pallet, and was perfectly oblivious of everything around me in a few minutes.

I had not slept twenty minutes, perhaps, before I was roused by the indomitable Polly, who placed her hand on my shoulder, and shook me gently. She held a wax candle in the other hand, (bees-wax was frequently used by the inhabitants,) which threw a brilliant glare in my face. I had been dreaming of robbers, and the first movement I made was to place my hand on my rifle, which stood against the wall near my head.

"Don't shoot *me*," said she, with a mischievous smile. "I am no robber. But I'll relieve you of your money, if you please. Give it to me; I'll be answerable that it is forthcoming in the morning. I have an old stocking will hold it, specie, bank notes and all." So saying, she turned to an old oak chest, which was secured by a thick iron clasp and ponderous padlock, from which she brought the article named, the common purse of the country, and very deliberately took the treasure from under my pillow, and deposited it in its ample pocket. Then, instead of placing it in the chest, she ran up a small ladder a few rounds, and carelessly threw it on a board lying loosely on the joists.

"*There!*" *said she*, "it's safe now. Nobody, even if

there were any here so disposed, would ever think of looking in such a place for money. The old chest might be carried off and split open with an axe. Now, come! They have sent after you, and are waiting for me. You *must* dance once more, or they will not let you sleep a wink to-night. Some of the men have gone home, and some are playing cards, and there are not enough to make up the set without you. I want you to be my partner. After this set, I will break up the dance, and then you can slip back to your snug bed. You *must* come. The whole frolic was got up in honor of you. Never mind your coat and neck-cloth—but you had better put on your boots, or else a splinter may run into your foot." She literally pulled me to my feet, and so there was no remedy. I was compelled very reluctantly to join the company again. It was the longest reel I ever witnessed. The same figures were repeated over and over again, until each couple became entirely exhausted. At length Polly gave me a significant squeeze of the hand, and at the same time, "gave the wink" to the old black fellow that played the violin. He tossed his head on his left shoulder, and scraped away with tremendous violence. In a moment, snap! snap! went the remaining strings.

"Thar!" said Cesar—"we's done for dis night, 'cept some gentleum goes to de store at Pike Bluff, for more strings; dese's all worn out, and is too short to be mended agin." And so he laid down the violin, while the party were just in the middle of a most animated figure.

"Here we are, all brought up standing!" said a very corpulent Miss, whose violent panting made her look as though she was galloping instead of standing.

"Cuss the old nigger!" exclaimed another.

"*It's not his fault*," said Polly. "The strings were

worn out. It's late, any how; and some of the folks are tired. But we can sing ballads, now, and enjoy ourselves."

Once more I stole away, and was soon fast asleep, not again to be molested. I rose very early in the morning, and lifting the curtains, groped my way out. I was startled on my way, however, to see the near proximity of my couch to that occupied by the females, four or five of whom were sleeping soundly on a broad pallet, and no male but myself having been placed in that room. Such scenes afforded me no pleasure; nor do I derive any from the description of them. But such is a true account of the manners and customs of new countries.

Although the dim twilight of morning was becoming visible in the hall, yet the candles still burned on the table in the next room, and the card-players were still at their work. My appearance was the signal for them to rise. They had not been playing for large stakes, and so no one had sustained any material loss. In fact, the young men were poor, and Mr. Beckel, who had more than once, on former occasions, been known to stake and win a negro, had no opportunity of increasing his store of ill-gotten gains. He paid me the amount of my bill; and after adding to it a hearty breakfast, I took my leave of him, with my ponderous stocking, which had been safely delivered into my hand by Polly.

My road lay along a narrow strip of level heavily-timbered bottom land, while a steep hill, likewise covered with trees, rose on my right hand. I had not gone more than a quarter of a mile before I roused a very large buck from its lair near the road-side. I stopped my horse to survey its enormous antlers, as it bounded over the undergrowth towards the hill. It run up the steep ascent some

forty yards, and paused, turning its head over its back, and gazing down at me very deliberately. We looked at each other a considerable length of time, and neither of us seemed disposed to move off first. At length, it occurred to me that he was not beyond the reach of my rifle, and I determined to give the matter a trial, if he should continue thus to banter me until I could dismount and take a deliberate aim at him. I was indifferent about success, and hence I was perfectly cool and self-possessed—a feeling which must be attained by all successful hunters. So I got down, drew up my gun, and fired with the same nonchalance that I would have done at a target. At the crack of my rifle, Sir Antler fell sprawling in his tracks. But the instant I perceived that he was really shot, I was seized with an uncontrollable fit of trembling. In vain I called my philosophy and reason to my aid. They would not come at my bidding. The idea that I had so unexpectedly brought down so noble a prize, completely unnerved me. It may have been joy and exultation; but it was certainly a very unmanly and disagreeable sensation.

I ran up the hill, however, for the purpose of cutting the buck's throat, an operation invariably performed by hunters, so that the blood may be cast out while it is warm. When I approached quite nigh my fallen victim, he raised his head and looked fiercely at me. His eyes were green with rage, and his hair was all standing out forward, instead of inclining backwards in its natural position. I paused; I saw that the ball had taken effect just where the shoulder-blades come together on the back; he was disabled in both fore legs, and could not possibly escape, although the wound was not sufficient to cause his death immediately. I saw him gradually turn round, until his head was pointed towards me. Then by degrees he

drew his hind legs under him. I perceived his object, when it was almost too late. I was only some ten feet below him. On my left, about four feet distant, stood an oak tree somewhat thicker than my body. My gun was empty, and the fury of the animal's stare sent a cold chill along my spine, similar to the sensation the Irishman had produced. At first I attempted to approach the tree very gently, hoping my soft movement would not be noticed by the buck. But I was mistaken. I saw him in the act of springing down on me. I made a desperate leap for the tree as he sprang at me. A protruding root saved me. His horns rattled upon the bark, covering me with fragments. The sound resembled in my ear the lunge of crossed bayonets. He fell on the upper side of the tree, and gathered his legs up for another spring, should I attempt to escape. I peeped round the tree, and met his eye of deadly defiance. He was ready for a renewal of the conflict, but had to wait until I exposed a sufficient mark for him to assail. With trembling hands I hastily charged my gun, spilling more than half the powder on the ground, and running down a naked ball. With this I fired at his broad forehead, not three feet distant. The lead was only mashed flat against the thick bone, like a sixpence, and fell to the ground between his feet; he did nothing more than shake his head contemptuously, and prepare to make another dash at me. I stepped back a few inches, so as to be hidden from his view by the intervening tree. But I felt that I was not safe. There was a larger tree some twenty feet below me. I sprang towards it, and when I reached it, the sharp prongs of my adversary's horns were buried in the earth but a few inches from my feet. Again I loaded my gun and fired—but so great was my trepidation that the bullet only grazed the skin on the

top of his head, without hurting him. Finding a better refuge in my new tree, I resolved to suspend active operations for a time, in the endeavor to recover a degree of self-possession, and in the hope that the animal might grow weaker from loss of blood, which flowed profusely from his wound, and ran down to my feet. Both of my objects were realized. I soon saw that the lips and tongue of the buck grew very pale; and as he became weaker, I got stronger. I then found no difficulty in charging my gun in a proper manner. The foe was still game. When I exposed myself a little too far on one side of the tree, so as to be enabled to take a sure aim, he immediately assumed the attitude of assault, and I was under the necessity of drawing back again. The next time I looked, however, I saw that he was very faint, and sinking; but he still maintained an aspect of defiance and an aggressive attitude. His eyes became glazed and inanimate a few moments after, and then I gave him the contents of my gun with unerring precision. He did not move. He was dead—and I believe he was dead when I fired. I then felt some sorrow for what I had done, mingled with admiration of the brave conduct of the noble animal.

By this time the repeated reports of my rifle had attracted the attention of the family I had recently parted from, and the old fiddler was sent out to see what I was doing. I showed him my prize, and told him to go back and get a horse, and then to present the buck in my name to Miss Polly.

I rode on my way, now remembering distinctly the advice that had more than once been given me by old hunters—never to approach a deer, or bear, or even a fox or turkey, which I had shot down, without first reloading my rifle. The game might not be dead, and might require

a prompt repetition of the shot to prevent its escape; there might be others in the vicinity; and I might "catch a tartar," in going hastily and unprepared to meet a wounded buck—often the fiercest and most dangerous animal that runs in the woods.

When I reached the high prairie, I met Mr. White, who "was going to town," and by him I sent all the money I had collected. He had heard all about my "buck scrape" at Mr. Middletown's, and laughed heartily at my absence of mind, attributing it of course to a "dear" of another description. Some had me in love with Miss M., some with one of the Misses W., and all said that Miss Polly was in love with me. It was a jest all round, and I began to enjoy the joke as much as any of them. I related to Mr. W. all the particulars of my last adventure, and made him confess that I had retrieved my character as a hunter. He said he would tell this exploit whenever he heard the other mentioned.

I rode on in quest of more money, and had more or less success wherever I went. There had been several severe frosts recently, and the leaves on the trees and bushes were beginning to turn yellow, and red, and to drop off. The tall grass became dry, but there was always a green undergrowth sufficient for the stock until late in December; and the scene near the settlements was still animated and beautified with flocks, and herds browsing on the extended plains.

However, as I departed farther from the river, the settlements became more scarce, and the groves so few in number and so small in extent, that the scene before me was that of an almost undiversified plain. The road I traveled was reduced to a very slightly-marked track through the mottled grass. After having called at several houses,

situated six or eight miles apart, at all of which I transacted business much in the way that satisfied me most, I was informed that the next neighbor I designed seeing lived some fifteen miles distant, and that there was no house on my way. It was then pretty late in the afternoon of a short day, and I felt a little uneasy about the chances of missing my way, should the night overtake me. But resolving to "take my chance," I pushed on.

When the sun was darting his last golden rays across the horizon before me, I began to grow weary, and still the house I sought was not in view. I could only see some patches of scrubby timber six or eight miles a head, and others as far distant on either hand. When it grew dark, the wolves set up a frightful howling on every side of me. I did not apprehend any danger of being attacked by them; but still no one in my situation would have felt altogether comfortable in mind. The scene around me was a dreary waste—a deep solitude—enlivened by no sounds but the fierce howls of carnivorous beasts. Should any accident befall me, so as to render me incapable of riding, or of defending myself, it was by no means improbable that these animals might take a fancy to pick my ribs. They grew bolder and bolder, and galloped along the road before me, every now and then stopping, two or three abreast, with their noses towards me, until I trotted up to within twenty paces of them. Then they would gallop off a few hundred yards, always keeping precisely a head of me, and again turn and howl until I approached close to them. The moon was now rising, and I determined to give them a shot or two, when it became a little lighter. The light did not seem to make them more circumspect, and so I ventured to slip down from my horse and blaze away at them. The scream and

whine which succeeded the report convinced me that I had wounded one of them. After the smoke cleared away, and after I was satisfied that none were coming towards me, I reloaded my gun, and mounting my horse, rode forward to see what had become of the party. The howling was hushed, at all events, and so I had rid myself of one annoyance. I soon beheld by the moonlight, several pools of blood in the path where the wolves had been standing; and then I heard a kicking kind of noise, or rustling, in some low hazel bushes a little distance on my right hand. I rode thither, expecting to find the wolf in his last agonies. But all was quiet. I was convinced that he was "done for," and searched about a considerable length of time in quest of him. I met with no success, and reluctantly abandoned the hunt. But now I was in a sad quandary. I had twisted and turned about so much in my search that I had lost my direction, and could not, for the life of me, indicate to a certainty the course I had been pursuing. I found the path, after making several circuits; but I could not decide which end of it to take, as the whole firmament had been suddenly overcast with clouds, which began to let fall some pattering drops of rain, and completely obscured the half-filled moon. Like the serpent, it was impossible to tell whether I was "going forward or coming back." I hesitated in this dilemma for many minutes. At last, another adage of the hunter occurred to me, and was the means of my extrication. I threw the reins on my horse's neck, trusting to his instinct to find out the nearest corn-crib. At first he was content with the food nearer at hand, so he thrust down his head, and began very leisurely to pluck the short tender grass that grew near the roots of the older growth, now in a state of decay. This did not satisfy me, and I touched him pretty sharply with the spur.

He then lifted his head, and finding I did not guide him, turned short about and pursued briskly a contrary direction to the one I had come nigh adopting.

My faithful white horse, equal to "Old Whitey" himself in sagacity, pursued his course with confidence, and increased his pace when he found that I still did not attempt to guide him. He had not gone more than three or four miles, when I distinctly heard a watch-dog's bark, an unerring sign that we were approaching a house. The sky was still overcast, and it was impossible for me to descry any house or other object in the distance, until my horse paused abruptly, when I discovered that he had his head over the fence which enclosed the little yard surrounding the house I was seeking. There were no lights in the house, the family having retired to rest, or rather thrown themselves down to sleep, as there was but one room in the dwelling. My horse neighed, and aroused the inmates before I had time to call them up. The first response was the deep bay of the watch-dog, which was now in the house.

"Who's that?" cried a voice from the partially opened door.

"It is I, Luke Shortfield. Is that you, Mr. Swissel?"

"Yes. Hop down—give me your nag—go in—you'll find the old woman there in bed," said he, coming forward, and taking the bridle of my steed.

"It looks like rain," said I.

"Yes, and it *roars* like it, out yonder in the prairie," he replied. "If you hadn't found us out as soon as you did, you'd have got your shirt washed in the saddle. You've just escaped a *scouring*, I tell you!"

There was, indeed, a mighty roar now distinctly heard *in the direction* whence I had come! I walked into the

house, while Mr. Swissel led my horse into a kind of stable, or pen, built of small poles. The old lady was up and stirring by this time; and holding a small iron lamp in her hand, which threw a faint light around, she tendered me a hearty welcome. She wore her night-gown and cap, not deeming it necessary to dress for the reception of company.

"Take a seat, sir, and rest yourself," said she, handing me a hickory-bottomed chair, on which I fairly sunk, feeling thankful that I had at last found a resting-place. "I'll have you something to eat, in a few minutes," she continued, removing the ashes from an ample bed of red coals in the broad fire-place. "I have coffee," she continued, "but no sugar; can you drink honey in your coffee?"

"Just give me a cup of milk, Mrs. Swissel; I always prefer it for supper," said I. This she had in abundance, and in an unadulterated, or at least in an undiluted state. And by the time Mr. Swissel entered, the room was filled with savory odors from rich slices of venison ham coiling about on the large live coals. The next minute, I was devouring with wolfish voracity the contents of a capacious pewter platter. The rich bread made of Indian corn, the richer milk, and still richer butter, honey, and venison ham, were more grateful to the palate and stomach than any hasty collation I have since partaken of. When I had finished my repast, the faithful dog, seeing I was an acquaintance of his master, came forward and gave me a welcome too. He wagged his tail, sneezed, rubbed his head against my legs, and employed all the usual devices of the sensible canine race to attract my attention, and manifest his friendly disposition. I gave him what he wanted, the fragments left in the platter, which I thought *was the kind of notice* he most desired from me. The rain

now poured in fitful torrents, and between the heavy showers, I could easily hear my faithful steed grinding his ample supply of corn. The stable adjoined the house, and neither of the buildings was constructed with a view to a total exclusion of healthful ventilation. Some half dozen children lay upon the floor, their only beds a few long-haired deer skins. They merely raised their heads to gaze at me a moment, then sank back, and resumed their slumbers.

A couch of deer skins (Swissel was a great hunter, and indeed a kind of Jack-of-all-trades), was prepared for me. Over this was spread a sheet, as well as a quilt for covering; and throwing myself down, I was soon fast asleep.

Once during the night I was awakened by the dog. He had laid himself down on the unoccupied portion of my soft pillow, and his nose was resting in too close proximity to my neck. I could feel his breath on my cheek, and felt indignant at his audacious presumption. To my "get away, sir!" he paid no attention. I then placed my hand on his head, and endeavored to thrust him away. To this he responded with a deep angry growl, which made me relinquish my hold and beat a retreat. He took advantage of my retrograde movement, and pushed himself farther on the pillow, now almost entirely abandoned to him. I determined not to submit to this impertinence. I kept a huge watch-dog myself at the store, and knew something of the habits and repugnances of the animal. Tobacco is their abomination. I got up gently, and lighting a cigar, resumed my recumbent posture on the disputed territory. I commenced operations cautiously, fearing my opponent might resent my offensive measure, by becoming still more an aggressor. I kept at a respectful distance at first, puffing in the direction of his nose; once or twice he

shook his head violently, making his ears flap loudly against his head, but again resuming his position. I ventured closer to him, and completely enveloped his head in a cloud of smoke. This time he sneezed, and coughed, and opened his eyes. I grew bolder, and ventured to touch his nose with the fire on the end of the cigar. He then abandoned the ground, with a whining yelp, and ran to the farthest corner of the room. I threw the cigar in the fire, and met with no other molestation during the night.

We were all up at dawn. The storm had blown over, and the sky was bright again. I mentioned the conduct of the dog to my host, who said I ought to have shot him. He said, however, that he was under the necessity of shutting up the dog in the house every night, to prevent the wolves from killing him. They had killed several for him in the yard, and in the stable, and would penetrate his house if there was an opening in it of sufficient size to admit them.

"You've come," said Swissel, as we rose from the breakfast-table, which was a large pine box turned bottom upwards, "at the time I appointed to pay you, but I have only twenty-five cents in the house; still you shall have the money before we part. I have a carry-all load of good trunks, covered with deer skins, made by myself, and made well, too, which I am just going to sell. I will go along with you, and as I sell them I will hand over the money to you."

He did accompany me, much to my satisfaction, for he was one of the best guides in the country, and some of the houses I had to visit were difficult to find. For more than a week we traveled together, during which time he met with purchasers for all his trunks, and paid me the

entire amount of my demand against him. Swissel was one of nature's own pioneers; he was perfectly happy in a state of semi-civilization, and in no other state. Subsequently, when his neighbors encroached too much on his primitive hunting-grounds, he went to Oregon.

At the end of a few weeks I had completed my circuit, without any incidents or adventures materially differing from those related. My brother Joseph was much pleased with the result of my collections, which amounted to a considerable sum. This amount, added to what he had taken in the store during my absence, would suffice to discharge all his liabilities in the east.

When winter set in, my brother departed on his journey to Philadelphia, every mile of which had to be traversed by land, as the rivers were closed with ice. At a later day, as the jobbers became familiar with the kind of goods sold in those distant regions; and as mutual confidence was established, most of the western merchants adopted the preferable plan of ordering their early supplies by letter, instead of encountering the fatigues of travel in an inclement season. This practice is still continued, and they await the opening of navigation, when a journey to the east is altogether an agreeable recreation.

I had the sole charge of the store. But it could not be supposed there would be much business transacted in the winter. The stock was reduced to about the amount of the profits of the concern; and all I was expected to do was to be able to realize enough cash by spring to pay the charges (then enormously high—the freight from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh alone being sometimes as much as four dollars per hundred pounds), on the new goods.

When left alone in the cold dreary snows of that me-

morable winter, I often experienced a deep and painful despondency hitherto unknown to me. The bleak winds howled through the trees around the building, and the hooting owl perched upon the chimney. My encounter with the Irishman, and the fame of my skill with the rifle, together with my large yellow lion-breasted house-dog, contributed to produce to some extent, a feeling of security during the long solitary nights. By day, I had frequently the company of Lieutenant A., once a meritorious officer in the army, but, from misfortune and injustice, then in thraldom to habits of intemperance. He had sought an obscure asylum, to die unlamented, and now occupied an apartment at the ferry house. He was very intelligent, and very polished in his manners, when sober. When his sensibilities were drowned in potations, he was inoffensive, for even then a sense of propriety kept him away from the store. Many a weary hour we whiled away over the chess-board, in the narration of adventures, and in various entertaining discussions. Peace to his ashes—now the only remains of a noble spirit crushed to earth!

CHAPTER VI.

I HAD now no means of pleasantly passing the long winter evenings, but such as books afforded. That winter I went through every volume in the store—the school books, Bible, and all—and no months of my life were ever spent more profitably. Mine was not an isolated case, hypothetically speaking. Most of the merchants in the far west, and *merchants' clerks* having charge of establishments, were,

and still are, during those dreary seasons, confined within their houses, without business to transact, and forced either to take to their books, or to sit down for weeks and months in unmitigated idiotic idleness. Many of them become, in consequence, the best read and most thoroughly informed men in the Union. Works of history, of science, of poetry—in short, of whatsoever nature they can lay their hands on—are devoured with insatiable avidity. And what they read they remember, for their attention is uninterrupted while they read. Their object is to shut out from vision, and to banish from the mind, the cheerless prospect around, and the unpleasant consciousness that the means of acquiring profits are suspended. To do this effectually, it becomes necessary for them to be profoundly absorbed in the contents of the page before them. They are completely shut out from the ephemeral society of the living; but they can commune deeply and closely with the illustrious dead, whose ideas are indestructible. The thoughts, incidents and lessons of the past are better learned in the obscurity of unbroken solitude, than amid the din of universities, or distractions of cities; and the unprecedented multiplication of books in this country, has scattered the works of all ages and of all countries into the most obscure recesses of our confederation, so that no one who has the disposition, need want the opportunity, to peruse them. I found dozens of volumes in every family I applied to, which had been brought with them from the old states. Thus, even in the newest of the western settlements, no one can be at a loss for the means of intellectual culture. And this is why the western merchant, so often apparently rude in manners and coarse and unfashionable in attire, exhibits a quality and capacity of mind which not unfrequently put his fashionable interlocutor

to the blush. As a class, and they certainly have their distinctive characteristics, the western merchants need not yield to any other class in most of the great essentials which constitute the citizen, of which America may justly boast. They are generally brave, honorable, generous, intelligent, sensitive, and setting aside the habit of profane swearing (which too much prevails among them), conscientiously moral. Occasionally, it is true, a merchant in the west makes a fraudulent failure, and swindles his creditors; but I have never known such to be western bred. He is an interloper, a Shylock, and not unfrequently an impostor, whom the eastern jobbers, in their eagerness to outstrip competition in their sales, have inconsiderately trusted without any well-authenticated information in regard to his solvency or honesty, to the prejudice of their established and punctual customers. An honest merchant, in a new country, cannot fail to succeed, if he has any business qualifications; for his expenses are the merest trifle, and it is his own fault if he does not realize a profit from his sales. He pays from fifty-two to seventy-five dollars per annum for board, and the remainder of his personal expenses need not amount to a larger sum. He can travel for weeks among his customers, making his collections, without expense either for himself or his horse, and will find a blazing hearth, a bounteous board, and a hearty welcome, wherever he goes.

About the middle of winter, I received a letter from Joseph, dated at Philadelphia, informing me that he had made a proposition to his partners to purchase their interest in the store at Pike Bluff, and had just received their reply, accepting his offer. As the goods had all been bought in the first place on credit, and had paid for themselves under his management, of course his partners (who *were men of means*, and deservedly enjoyed good credit),

had not been under the necessity of employing any actual capital in the concern; and consequently the only real interest they now had in it was their share of the profits, some fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars. This amount Joseph stipulated to pay them in one or two years; and henceforward he was the sole proprietor of the establishment. He made a full and candid statement of his affairs to the jobbers in Philadelphia, which was corroborated in every particular by letters from his late partners. The Philadelphia merchants were quick to perceive his remarkable qualifications for business. They were pleased with his address, and frankness of expression. They were assured of his honesty—and were satisfied. Without the slightest hesitation, or symptoms of reluctance, (which the true western merchant is always acute at discerning,) the houses of whom his stock had been purchased in the first instance, without any exception, offered to sell him as many goods as he wanted, on the usual time—six months, payable in twelve, charging six per cent. interest after six months.

Joseph's new stock amounted to about seven thousand dollars; it was well selected, and the goods were all bought at the lowest "time prices." He made his bills principally in houses of long standing, of established character, and ample capital, so that no impositions had been practiced on him.

By the fifteenth of April, Joseph arrived at home with his goods. The business, it was true, had been dull during his absence; nevertheless, I had accumulated more means, from collections and cash sales, than he anticipated. He expressed his satisfaction at my conduct, and hinted *something* about giving me an opportunity of doing better *for myself than the* mere realization of an inconsiderable

salary. From my speculations and savings, I already possessed five hundred dollars, which was more than he had when he commenced business twelve months before.

But his first business on hand to be transacted, was his marriage; no farther obstacles now stood in the way, and he was not the one, in his present circumstances, to "ask an extension of time." Mr. White made arrangements to board and lodge him and his bride; and so we set off late one afternoon to the wedding. It was a two hours' ride, and we made haste to be there at the appointed time—Mr. White's son stipulating to stay at the store until my return the next morning. It was not a trip of pleasure to *me*. I was mounted on a horse that could not, or would not, canter or gallop, and trotted miserably hard when urged out of his usual slow gait. My complaints and expostulations had no effect on Joseph; nothing could restrain him. He saw me hammered almost to death, but only mocked at my calamity. On he spurred, and I had to keep up with him. At length he came to a brook, which had overflowed its banks by reason of the recent heavy rains, and his horse manifested much reluctance to plunge into the current. He feared the horse, a borrowed one, ("Old Whitey" having been disabled by an accident,) could not swim well, if at all, and he did not wish to wet his fine clothes.

"Luke," said he, "your horse I know to be a good swimmer, for I have heard his owner say so; you must let me have him to cross this water."

"But *your* horse, perhaps," I replied, drawing a long breath, and wishing to prolong the parley until I could become rested in some measure, "is one of the splashing, plunging kind, that swim with nothing but their noses

above water; and for that reason does it follow that I must have him to cross over?"

"Come, come, dismount," said he, alighting. "If I were to get wet, I might have a chill, and then there would be no kind of a wedding."

"But," I replied, "I am subject to fits of the ague, and you are not. However, you are the oldest, and have a right to command. But, remember, we are not to exchange back again as soon as we get over."

I mounted his horse, and he mine. He then plunged into the whirling stream without difficulty, and I flounced after him, by dint of much spurring and other means of coercion. His horse swam as smoothly as a boat, with his back above water. Joseph placed his knees on the saddle, and went through without wetting a thread of his garments. My horse went up and down. When his hind feet touched the bottom, I embraced his neck with my knees; but when he made a plunge forward, I had to spring back a few feet. It was by means of this rocking, hobby-horse process that we got through; and when he made his last spring, I came off behind, holding on to his tail, and standing up to my knees in the water, for we had then reached the opposite side. Joseph had turned round, and was laughing at me. That was the "unkindest cut of all!"

"Luke," said he, "where did you learn that fore and aft kind of riding?"

"I invented it," said I; "necessity is the mother of invention, you know. Now I suppose you would like to have your horse again, but you won't get him, unless you are willing to sit on a wet saddle."

"*No,* you may keep him," said he, as he perceived the *seat of the saddle* had been thoroughly immersed. The

balance of my ride was tolerably smooth, and this was truly a comfort. But Joseph did not bear his infliction without pronouncing a few hasty anathemas.

We arrived in time, and the nuptials transpired in the usual way. There was much company, wine, cakes, &c. Instead of a chill, I had a severe fit of the tooth-ache, and was forced to have a tooth extracted before morning. The doctor being only about half awake, and but half sober, pulled the wrong tooth. It sufficed, however, to ease the one next to it in a slight degree, and then I determined it should remain. I groaned through a sleepless night, and returned with a swelled jaw to Pike Bluff, the next morning, inwardly resolving never to go to another wedding—unless it should be my own; and that I would be in no hurry about it—as if I could tell then what would happen!

Joseph and his bride were soon quietly settled at Mr. White's. The spring business commenced under very favorable auspices, but did not terminate so fortunately as was anticipated. The fact that we had realized a handsome profit, became pretty generally known, (as such facts are always sure to be,) and the amount was enormously magnified, (for the reports of good fortune are ever exaggerated,) so that Joseph was doomed to have competition. At that time business operations were under the propitious control of the U. S. Bank, and credit was universal. Almost any man from the west could obtain credit in those days. It was therefore no difficult matter for another adventurer to set up an opposition establishment at Pike Bluff. So another store-house was soon in course of erection, and another stock of goods was on the way thither. This made Joseph uneasy. His restless, monopolizing spirit could ill brook a disappointment. But there was no possible way to prevent other men from selling goods in his vicinity, if

they saw proper to do so, and he had to suppress his rather unreasonable dissatisfaction and displeasure. A hostile course would beget sympathy in favor of his competitor, and he considered every dollar's worth sold by his rival as so much abstracted from his sales. He had to bear it. But he determined to realize the means of paying his debts, from his sales; and he was resolved that a portion of his goods should be sold where there was no rival establishment. So he packed up a small assortment, consisting of about fifteen hundred dollars' worth, and sent me off with it to found a city higher up the river, on the opposite side. I put in my five hundred dollars, and was to have half the profits. He wrote to Kentucky for another brother, who was now old enough to assist him, (there were more of the same crop growing up,) and I made my arrangements to open my little stock at a flat place on the north side of the river, some thirty miles farther up, where there were a horse mill and a farm house. I had my boxes marked HANOVER, in honor of a German that lived there. It is now a city of that name.

When I reached Hanover, I found to my surprise that the house Mr. Grund had written about as being large enough to hold the goods, had been originally used as a *hen house.* It had been built, it was true, with some care, to exclude the "varmints;" yet it did not come quite up to my idea of a store room. But there was no other, and I was compelled to take it. The door, which had been square, and was some five feet from the ground, (the chickens being taught to ascend on a pole,) had to be cut down to the usual form; shelves and counters had to be constructed and placed in the room; and finally, the whole building had to undergo a process of thorough renovation, after my arrival with *the goods, which* subjected me to a delay of several days.

These were all accomplished, however, in the shortest time possible, and then I began business in the way we had commenced at Pike Bluff. I had a "good run." The novelty of the thing brought everybody in the parts adjacent, to *town*. The mill helped me, and I helped it amazingly. Between us we had a monopoly. The proprietor of the soil was much delighted with the idea of realizing a fortune from the sale of lots, and, as the sequel will show, was not altogether disappointed.

The fame of my store spread far and near, and my sales being out of all proportion to the amount of the stock on hand, I was soon under the necessity of ordering a farther supply from Joseph; and at the same time I was enabled to make him a handsome remittance. He was pleased to see the goods converted into ready money, at fair profits; but he was a little jealous, and in a letter protested against my enticing his customers up the country across the river. He claimed the south side as his exclusive dominions. I had used some exertion to get a few of them over, who happened to be cash buyers, and felt the justice of his expostulations; nevertheless, I do not remember to have relaxed my efforts. There was one of his customers, however, whom I did not seek to entice away from him. This was Miss Polly Beckel, who came without being invited, and annoyed me once more. There was no ferry at Hanover; but we kept a canoe near the store, which was sent across for those who wished to come over. I could not "paddle my own canoe," but made arrangements with a son of Mr. Grund (some fourteen years old) to do it for me. One morning, I perceived a female on the opposite shore beckoning for the canoe, and as there happened to be no one in town to occupy my attention behind the counter, I got into the boat with the boy and crossed over. Before we had

arrived within one hundred yards of the shore, I discovered that it was the veritable wild Polly herself whom I had gone to meet. About the same time, Wilhelm, the boy-rower, recognized her also, and began to smile mischievously.

"What are you smiling about, Wilhelm?" I inquired.

"Why, that's that dare-devil gal, Polly Beckel, and she'll be dead sure to cut up some capers in the boat. I hope you can swim?" said he, looking round at me.

"Oh yes," said I, "but you don't suppose she will throw me overboard, do you?"

"She *mought* do it," said he, with a sinister shake of the head, "if she should get into one of her high ways."

We struck the shore a moment after this ominous intimation, and Polly, having tied her steed to a tree, came prancing down to us in high spirits.

"Hurrah for you, Luke!" cried she, springing into the boat, and wringing my reluctantly proffered hand. "This is right. Who but the groom should come to row the bride over the ferry?"

"But I didn't come to row you over," said I, "nor did I know who you were; besides, I don't know how to paddle a canoe."

"I'll learn you," said she, seizing the paddles in the hands of Wilhelm, who relinquished them instantly, and without a word of remonstrance. He knew her skill. The canoe sped out into the current under the impulsion of her vigorous strokes. When we were about half way over, she ceased rowing, and moved near to where I was sitting. She assumed a fierce look, in which, however, I could perceive harmless sport strikingly blended.

"Now you want some fun, I suppose," said I, returning her steady gaze.

"*No—it is* a serious matter," she replied. "I have

got you in my power, and I have a right to make use of my advantage. Will you promise before this witness to marry me in thirty days?"

"I *would* promise," said I, "if I did not wish to see what you will do when I refuse—therefore I *won't* promise."

"Then sink!" cried she. In an instant, and before I could be aware of her purpose, she stooped down and pulled a cork from an auger hole which had been bored through the bottom of the canoe, and the water gushed up in a stream about an inch in diameter. This was somewhat alarming; and perceiving my surprise, she held the cork aloft in her hand, and said in a tone of triumph:

"Promise, or sink! If you attempt to snatch the cork, I will throw it overboard." And she drew back her arm, in the attitude of hurling it away. I stepped forward, and placed my foot on the hole.

"Now," said I, as I saw her cast one or two fearful glances at the water, which began to spread over the bottom of the frail boat, "I will give you one minute to replace the cork. If you do not put it back within that time, I will leap overboard and swim to the shore, leaving you to get out of the difficulty of your own raising the best way you can."

"Oh, if you can swim, that's an end of the joke," said she, stopping the leak.

"But it was not one of your *dry* jokes, Miss Polly," said I; "and now it is about time for you to cease your nonsense with me. I begin to understand the game myself, and two can play at it. You may provoke me to retaliate."

"No; I'll make a child's bargain with you—let you alone if you let me alone—provided you really don't want a wife. If *you want me*, you can have me before any magistrate or

parson. But you must speak quick, even before next Thursday. On that day I am to be married to one who has chosen me, provided I can't get one of my own choosing before that time. And I have come to-day to buy a white dress for the wedding."

This was true. I sold her the dress, and she was married at the time named—and to the man who happened to be present when I had my first encounter with her.

Mr. Grund was not idle while I was doing such a flourishing business. He had got the county surveyor to lay out the town in lots, and had appointed a day of sale, when a fourth of them (about one hundred) were to be knocked down to the highest bidder.

On the day appointed for the sale, I did an immense business. I sold two hundred dollars' worth of goods, which had cost me only one hundred and twenty. Men, women and children came from every direction in the vicinity, to see the beginning of a new town, and many made investments in lots. They brought from five to thirty dollars a piece—dimensions, fifty by one hundred and fifty feet. Thus Mr. Grund got, for a few acres of ground, more money than he had paid a few years before for his whole farm of three hundred and twenty acres. And the portion sold was flat, and subject to inundation.

There was a stranger among the company at the sale, of whom no one knew anything. He came on foot, but from what place no one knew. He was a young man somewhat older than myself, with a prominent nose, high cheek bones, and small sparkling eyes. Before the day was over, I began to suspect he might be one of those venders of "tender" goods, a cunning Jew, in quest of a location to cheat his neighbors, and spoil the regular trader's business. He staid about the store, and observed with glistening eyes

every dollar I received. He bought nothing of me himself, but inquired the prices of a vast number of articles. At length, when the sale commenced, and the lot I occupied was put up, he was the only one who bid against me. It had been previously arranged that I was to have the property at my own price, as I was instrumental in getting up the town. But the mysterious stranger had not been a party to the arrangement; and so he ran up the house—now dignified by the term store-house—to fifty dollars. Upon this I quit bidding, and hinted something about selecting another location a few miles farther up the river, where the ground was not so low, and not so likely to be washed away by the June floods. This alarmed Mr. Grund, and he whispered the auctioneer to withdraw that lot from his list, at the same time assuring me that if I would pay for the deed, he would make me a present of the property. They then put up the lot adjoining mine, and the Jew bid for that also. I now turned the tables on him. He grew very animated as I bid against him, and then, for the first time, threw out a hint of his purpose there. When the lot was knocked down to him, he mounted a stump on it, and addressed the company as follows:

"Genlemen, I am a merchant. My goots are on te way up te river, and vill pe here in a veek. I vant to get a house puilded along side of Mr. Shortfield's as soon as possible—and I tink it can pe done by te time te goots come. I vant to make a contrack for te puilding of it—te one who pids te lowest, shall have it; but he must take his bay in goots. I vill help puild it myself—my labor vill be thrown in. Give me a pid, genlemen."

It was knocked down, or rather to be knocked up, for forty dollars, the Jew's assistance thrown in.

This announcement came upon me like a thunder-clap in

a clear sky. Already the Jew was surrounded with encouraging friends, who predicted that Hanover would soon be a great business place, and that he would be equally as successful as I had been. Even Mr. Grund himself ventured slyly to whisper a word of encouragement in his ear. Moses told them all that I was charging too high for my goods, and that he intended to sell his much cheaper. This was gall and wormwood to me, and at once made me his enemy. I could now appreciate my brother Joseph's feelings when a competitor interfered with his prospects. There were no means of keeping competition away; yet I had the consolation to know that goods in St. Louis, where the Jew had purchased, were generally from fifteen to twenty per cent. higher than in Philadelphia, where mine came from.

I wrote to Joseph for advice, informing him of what had occurred. He wrote back, stating that his competitor did not interfere with him much, as his stock had been purchased in St. Louis. He said I had only to make it known to the people that my rival's goods did not come directly from the east, and then they would give mine the preference. But Joseph did not take it into consideration that my competitor was a *Jew* peddler—a dealer in *tender* goods, (such as had been damaged, and sold at auction,) and that the purchasers were men more familiar with quantities than qualities.

Before the "new store" was in operation, a communication came on from Washington, in reply to an application that had been made when the lots were advertised, establishing a post-office at Hanover, with a weekly mail, and appointing Mr. Grund, who was on the right side in *politics*, post-master. The first mail brought an anonymous letter from St. Louis to Mr. Grund, which he handed

me to read. It ran as follows:—"Sir—there is a certain Moses Tubal, a Jew peddler, from Indiana, gone up to your parts to engage a house to sell goods in. Beware of him. He will sell his goods low enough, no doubt; but it is strongly suspected here that they are stolen goods, which the robbers have employed him to sell. You will make these facts known to all the people round your place."

"That is a very curious epistle," said I.

"That it is," said he.

Here we both paused a considerable length of time, while our thoughts ran in quite different channels. I was for having Moses arrested at once, and by this means summarily disposed of. But then, as I knew of no one who had been robbed, and as the letter only dealt in hints, there would be no sufficient grounds to go upon. And then it occurred to me that, as the letter was an anonymous one, some of the Jew's friends might suppose I had got it written to get him out of my way.

"It is my opinion," said Mr. Grund, "that the Jew wrote it himself. I know something of their tricks. They are good judges of human nature. If the impression should get abroad that the goods are stolen, a majority of the people would prefer to buy them, for that very reason. They will think they can be had for less money than goods got in an honest way. Now, suppose we try the Jew. I will give him the letter, to do with it as he pleases; and you and I will agree not to mention the circumstance for two weeks. If Moses suppresses the contents of the letter, I shall think the goods have been stolen, sure enough; if he makes them known, I shall be convinced that it was all a trick of his own invention."

This was so reasonable a proposition, that I readily agreed to it. Moses was at that moment standing on his lot, supet-

intending the erection of his building. I observed his actions when Mr. Grund called him aside, and placed the letter in his hands. He threw up his arms, and stamped, and cursed the writer—but did not once declare he was innocent. On the contrary, he counterfeited to the life the looks and manners of a guilty man. He begged Mr. G., with much apparent earnestness, not to say anything about the letter, promising to "clear it all up" to his satisfaction in a few weeks. Mr. Grund promptly agreed not to mention it. This was more than the Jew hoped for, and he became really embarrassed. Then his pretended rage increased, and Mr. Grund left him.

My sales at Hanover had so far exceeded our calculations, that the amount of business already done had left both Joseph and myself with greatly reduced stocks. Indeed, our joint sales made up a sum total equal to a year's business at Pike Bluff—and the money already realized, together with a very moderate amount which we could safely rely upon deriving from collections in the fall, would be an ample fund with which to pay all the eastern debts. A generous confidence had been reposed in Joseph by the Philadelphia merchants, and he resolved to embrace every opportunity to convince them that it had not been misplaced. Although it was agreed that he should have twelve months' time, yet Joseph had contrived to remit two-thirds of the amount of his indebtedness before the expiration of six months; and all the letters he received, acknowledging the safe arrival of his remittances, contained encouraging expressions which greatly cheered him, and gave a new impetus to his exertions.

Joseph and I both now began to feel like men, independent men—and men of some substance. He was worth, at this time, some $4000, and I about $1000. But it was

not our money which made us feel independent; it was our conscious capacity for business, our confirmed success, our established credit in Philadelphia, our good health, and our confidence in the future. We were independent, because we no longer needed the recommendations of men of capital to obtain any reasonable amount of goods on the usual time.

Such being our condition, there was in reality no serious cause to apprehend any immediate detriment to our interests from the encroachments of rival traders. In fact, Joseph's competitor was already meditating a retreat, being convinced of his inability to cope with so energetic and enterprising a rival, who, besides, possessed superior facilities in the procurement of his goods. It was quite different, however, with my rival, the Jew. His stock was equal to mine in amount; and he had the advantage of me in the existence of a very prevalent belief that his goods had cost him less than mine had cost me. It was whispered over the country that he was a rogue, and had stolen his goods; and the very natural inference was that he could afford to undersell me. Mr. Grund now concurred in the belief that he had written the anonymous letter himself, and that it was a paltry trick to take away a portion of my customers. It was characteristic of the peddling Jews. Success is their motto, and they pursue it with indomitable perseverance, and with a total indifference to reputation. They have no credit themselves, and they credit nobody. They trade upon the productions of others (they never create or produce anything), and cheat the Christians with their own wares. Such was the opinion I conceived of the peculiar class to which my rival belonged. It may not have been altogether unmixed with unfounded prejudice;

nevertheless, it has not been quite removed by the experience of subsequent years.

Moses, in despite of my undisguised repulsive attitude, now resolved to be sociable with me. He came into my establishment every day when there were no country people in town, and sat down to talk about matters and things in general. And while his tongue wagged, his eyes were not idle. They wandered from shelf to shelf, beginning at the bottom and going up, then down again, and so on through the entire stock, as if he were taking an inventory. This he repeated until he had fixed in his memory the quantities, qualities and styles of my whole assortment. I did not, for some time, suspect his motive; but his operations soon convinced me of the unworthy advantage he had taken of my passive indulgence.

I ascertained from some of my customers, and from Mr. Grund in particular, that the Jew was selling certain kinds of goods, similar to mine on the shelves, at greatly reduced prices; while he was selling other kinds of which I had but few or none, at enormously high rates. This opened my eyes to the real object of Moses in paying me so many visits. My assortment was much broken, and it would be a month before I could expect to receive the few goods ordered from the east. In the mean time, Moses, who was a "new broom, swept clean." He caught nearly all the cash that was passing. He continued to watch my shelves, and I ascertained that immediately after any particular style of my goods disappeared, a similar kind in his establishment always rose in value; for he was conscious of his monopoly; and when such articles were called for, he knew they could not be had of me at any price. Thus affairs progressed for some time, and Moses grew bolder and more impudent, for impudence is a fixed cha-

racteristic of the peddling Jew. But I conceived a plan to frustrate his arrangements, and which promised me some amusement. I began to return his visits. It is said that the most expert strategist is never so liable to be frustrated by an opposing scheme, as when he is absorbed in his own secret plans. It was so with Moses. He never suspected that I had the capacity of conceiving and executing a counter-stratagem. Always when I returned to my own store, I noted down on paper the result of my observations. I also kept a memorandum of the kinds of goods he sold at high prices. And when the list was completed, his game was reduced to a demonstration. He sold the kinds of goods I had the most of at about cost, and those which I had not, at an enormous profit. The consequence was that I was rapidly going out of business; and my rival had circulated a report that I intended to move away in the fall. That was the result he was aiming at, and it would very probably have been consummated, had I not fortunately frustrated his mode of reducing me to such an extremity.

My list being completed, I sent it off to Joseph, requesting him to send me the articles named immediately, and explaining my purpose to him. He responded promptly, for it happened that he had an abundance of the goods I needed, while he was deficient in the kind I had on hand, and which the Jew had rendered worthless to me. So I resolved to send him a box in exchange. When my box arrived, Moses was all curiosity, and his entire faculties seemed to be concentrated in his little, piercing eyes. He was at the landing when the box was put on shore, and slyly looked over my shoulder at the bill of lading, hoping to ascertain what the box contained by the description; but he was disappointed—it merely stated "one box, *weighing 300 pounds.*" He then peered at every side of

the box, as it was rolled over and over up the bank. He found nothing on it except my address. An examination of the ends was attended with the same unsatisfactory result. But he did not despair, while I enjoyed keenly his fruitless efforts, and my anticipated triumphs.

"Vat kint of goots are you getting, Luke?" he inquired, in a most familiar manner, and at the same time with an affected air of indifference.

"I don't know, exactly," said I, carelessly, "for I have not seen them yet. But I have too many goods on hand now, for the small amount of business I am doing. They are, perhaps, the same kind I have been selling."

This made the eyes of Moses sparkle with delight. He had not the slightest idea that I was meditating, or capable of meditating, an enterprise against his establishment. So I had no hesitation in concealing the fact from him; and perhaps violated a principle of morals in stating directly, or leading him to infer from my remarks, what was not exactly the truth. To this habit I was sometimes, in common with most merchants, eastern as well as western, too much addicted. I condemn it now, because it is wrong, and because it is never really necessary.

It was nearly night when I got my box in the store, where I suffered it to lie unopened till after supper. In the mean time the Jew's curiosity had frequently brought him in to see the precise nature of its contents—but to no avail. I seemed to be indifferent about opening it at all, as though it contained nothing that would be of benefit to my declining business.

After supper, I complained of a headache, and shut myself up in the store to sleep it off, as I alleged. But when I was alone I worked manfully. I opened the box by a noiseless process, so as not to be heard by Moses, who

was my close neighbor, and who was always on the alert to pry into my secrets. I took the goods out and marked them at very low prices, perhaps only some twenty-five per cent. on the cost and carriage. I then hid them under the counter, and in other places out of sight. I next repacked the box with goods with which I was overstocked, leaving only a few pieces of those kinds on the shelves, which I also reduced in price; and then, towards midnight, when I supposed the Jew was asleep, I nailed up the box again, and left it in the place where it stood the previous evening. Finally, after arranging the shelves so as to make it appear that no material alterations had taken place in the nature of their contents, I lay down on my simple couch, and dreamed exultingly of the success I anticipated the next day, which was Saturday, when many people, as usual, would doubtless be in town.

Bright and early the next morning, the aquiline nose of Moses appeared in my door, while his eyes ran rapidly over the establishment. He had heard the hammer, and did not doubt that I had opened the box.

"Dere's te pox," said he; "I tought I heard you knock it open in te night."

"You must have been dreaming about that box," said I; "there it stands just as it stood last night, and as it will stand until the boat comes down, and then I'll send it back to Joseph. He can sell its contents sooner than I."

Moses, well contented with the result of his exploration, withdrew to his own premises, no doubt with a feeling of contempt for the stupidity of a rival who suffered him to monopolize all the business of the place. And I must do Moses the justice to say that he had managed his affairs very skillfully, barring his convictions of my continued obtuseness. In the most quiet manner imaginable, and always

maintaining a show of profound respect for me, he had contrived, for many weeks, to sell my old customers all the goods they wanted, and placed me in the predicament of holding the empty bag. When they desired to purchase such articles as I had on hand, Moses was sure to undersell me; and when they called for such goods as I was out of, Moses invariably, and very complaisantly too, sent them to me to satisfy themselves that they could not be had on better terms than he offered. Now I was prepared to avail myself of this extreme condescension of friend Moses. Moses was a wise man, but he had not penetrated all the hidden things of the hen-house.

The first persons who came to town that day, were a substantial farmer, his wife and daughter, with a well-filled stocking—such being the kind of purse in which they generally brought their hard dollars. They looked through the Jew's establishment first, pricing all the articles they intended to buy, and then came to price mine. This is the invariable custom of such plain cautious purchasers in the west. They look at everything, and ask the price of everything, at every store in town, before they make up their minds where to leave their hard earnings. Those only buy carelessly, who buy on credit, and without a comparison of qualities and prices. And this class, whether it be in the city or country, ultimately pay some twenty-five per cent. more, for the same amount of merchandize, than those who "pay as they go."

After sitting in silence some minutes, and quietly surveying the goods, as the country folks are in the habit of doing, the old lady spoke first.

"I see you've got some blue calico," said she; "but they say you sell it higher than the Jew does."

Now this was one of the kinds of staple goods of which I

had hitherto kept a large quantity, and the price of which the Jew had put down. At that time, (eighteen years ago,) its cost in Philadelphia was fourteen cents per yard, and my price had been twenty-five cents. The Jew put it down to eighteen and three quarter cents. But I had packed up all I had of it, excepting a few pieces precisely similar to the styles kept by the Jew, for Joseph.

"Who says so?" was my response, as I took down the articles and displayed them on the counter, so that she might see they were exactly like the Jew's goods which she had been examining.

"He told us so himself," she replied, while she put on her spectacles and looked at the goods.

"What does he ask for his blue calico?" I inquired, when I perceived she was satisfied that the goods before her were similar to the kind she had been looking at in my rival's store.

"He sells his'n at eighteen and three quarter cents, and he says you ask twenty-five cents for your'n."

"Then," said I, "he has been slandering me. My price is only sixteen and two-third cents, which is under the Jew's."

"Oh, did you ever!" exclaimed the old lady's daughter, a fat, blooming girl of sixteen. "What a shame it is for people to tell such lies! Buy your calico of Mr. Shortfield, mamma—it's better, and cheaper, and prettier than Mr. Tubal's."

The old man lost no time in giving the hint to the old lady, and she was not slow in taking it. The goods were soon cut off, wrapped up, and paid for.

"Now," said the old man, "we want to buy two solid gingham dresses; but one of our neighbors told us you were out of that kind of goods. I think the Jew asks

too high for his—but he told us to see if you could sell it any lower. Perhaps he knew you had none on hand."

"Your neighbor was mistaken," said I, taking an armful from under the counter. "I have a very handsome little assortment of it. What did the Jew ask for his?"

"He asked sixty-eight and three quarter cents a yard for this kind of goods," replied the old man.

"Yes, this is the kind," added both the old lady and the daughter. Now, this kind of goods (at that time) cost thirty cents, and the usual retail price was fifty-six and a quarter cents. So it was plain that the Jew was playing a very unfair game with me. I felt justified in departing from my regular course, to "pay him back in the same way" that he had been operating against me.

"Then," responded I, with much assumed indignation, "the Jew intended to cheat you. He asks more for his goods than they are worth. I will sell you this gingham for thirty-seven and a half cents a yard."

"My gracious!" exclaimed the daughter. "Why mamma, don't let's go back to the Jew's store again. Let's buy all our goods here."

"If Mr. Shortfield will sell us what we want as low as the Jew, we'd as lief buy of him as anybody else," observed the old man, dryly, who was desirous of "bringing me down" on all the rest of the articles he wanted. And the more effectually to accomplish his object, he displayed his well-filled stocking, and counted me out the money for the two gingham dresses.

They then mentioned article after article which they had examined at the Jew's, and for which Moses, supposing they could not be had of me, had asked them enormous prices, and then referred them to me to see if I could sell *them any cheaper.* Contrary to his belief, I had them all,

and sold them at greatly reduced prices. The party made all their purchases of me, and paid me some forty dollars in old Spanish milled coin.

When the old man went after the horses, which had been tied to the rack before the door of Moses, the Jew watched his motions very closely. The move was incomprehensible to him. But when he saw the whole party depart from my door, with their saddle-bags and meal-bags filled with bundles of goods, he looked daggers. His lips were perfectly livid, and his cheeks were swollen with rage and disappointment. That was a happy moment for me. Every western merchant who has had to compete with a Jew rival, will be at no loss to appreciate my feelings of joy and triumph. But my success did not end here. Party after party followed the first, all departing in the same way from my door, fully supplied with the articles they wanted. Every one purchased from me on better terms than had been offered by Moses. That day my sales amounted to one hundred and fifty dollars, mostly cash, while Moses had not sold more than ten dollars' worth! This was a mystery he could not comprehend. Towards night Moses could restrain his eagerness to penetrate the cause of so unexpected a turn in my favor, no longer. He came in avowedly to get a note changed, but really to see if I had not been getting some new goods. I asked him to sit down, which he did, while his eyes ranged over the shelves in quest of my new stock. But it was "no go." Everything had again assumed the old appearance. He could perceive no change in my assortment, and I was resolved to make no voluntary or forced revelations. In vain he sought to find out the kinds of goods I had been selling, and the prices.

"*You had a pusy* day, I peliefe," said he.

"Why, yes," said I, lying on my back on the counter, manifesting signs of weariness. "A breeze sprung up in my favor, some how or other, to-day. It has been dull enough for some weeks with me, while the wind seemed to set altogether in your favor. Time about is fair play. But still it is rather curious that I should have such a brisk day, with such a broken assortment. When my new goods arrive from Philadelphia, I hope I shall get a fair share of the business—if not, I'll pull up stakes and be off in the spring."

"My new goots vill come next month, too. But I vouldn't keep dem here till next spring, if I couldn't sell dem. But my stock is goot, now, and I ought to pe selling dem priskly."

"You have been doing all the business until to-day, and no doubt you will keep the run to yourself till my goods get here. Then we'll see what I can do. I've got my invoices, and find there has been a material decline in the east. What do you have to pay for blue and pink solid ginghams, in St. Louis?"

"Oh, apout tirty-five cents," said he.

"I find mine are invoiced at twenty-eight cents, this time," said I, carelessly, while Moses evinced much vexation. He had a large amount of them on hand, and I was satisfied they had cost him thirty-seven and a half cents a yard.

The Jew returned to his own premises without solving the problem which disturbed his mind. And as he went out I contrived to open my drawer and cause a considerable gingling of specie.

During the ensuing week, I did all the business. But the Jew at length ascertained the reason. One of my customers, who had been asked a much higher price by the

Jew than he had given me for the same goods, unrolled his bundle and exhibited to the staring eyes of Moses a variety of articles which he supposed he alone possessed. He could not deny that they were lower than his own goods; and he had the mortification to reflect that he had been sending his customers to me under the conviction that I could not supply their wants; whereas I had been accommodating them in every instance. Then he learned to his dismay that I had been selling blue calico below the unfair reduction he had made himself! And now winter was approaching, and most of his stock would be out of season. Besides, it depended upon his success in the sale of the goods on hand, whether he would be able to replenish for the winter. I had the run, and determined not to lose it. I deemed it better to sell even at cost and carriage, than to hold the goods, that were soon to be unseasonable, over to the next year. So I continued the game, and poor Moses felt at last that he had been outdone by a Christian competitor. To make matters still worse with him, many of the articles which he had bought at auction proved to be *very* tender, and otherwise defective, which caused a perfect storm about his ears. But he had explanations, apologies, and promises to pacify them all; and he determined to be revenged on me. The western Jews are exceedingly vindictive, and most pertinacious in their efforts to cripple their Christian competitors.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING the early part of the winter, I had a visit from Joseph. He still did most of the business at Pike Bluff, as I continued to do at Hanover. We had now sufficient funds in hand to pay the balance on the spring purchases, and also for the goods ordered in the fall. Our joint sales this year amounted to more than sixteen thousand dollars, and the net profits could not have been less than five thousand dollars. Joseph proposed that I should go east for our spring goods—a proposition which I joyfully accepted. So it was arranged that our younger brother Isaac, who had been with Joseph, should take charge of the establishment at Hanover during my absence.

Just about the time appointed for me to commence the journey to Philadelphia, I received a letter from Blanche, whom I had determined to see on my way eastward. But this epistle was dated at Norfolk, Va. Here it is, in full, copied from the original which now lies before me:

"*Norfolk, Va.*, Dec. 1st, 183–.

"DEAR LUKE:—I cannot restrain myself any longer from writing to you. Your last letter, informing me of your good prospects, and of your intention to commence business for yourself at Hanover, was directed to *me*, and not in an envelope to a third person—so it fell into the hands of my guardian-uncle, and excited his wrath and indignation to a frightful extent. But the worst of it was that he did not tell me what it was all about, but kept the letter himself. Now, I am my own mistress, and have some fortune here in old Virginia in my own right. I might at any time

relieve myself of his supervision, and his eccentric solicitude. Yet as my uncles are the nearest of kin that I have, I hope to be able to avoid a rupture with them. But to my narration. A few days after your letter fell into his hands, he announced his intention to take me to Virginia, and leave me under the protection of his brother, my uncle Edgar Beaufort. Not being aware of the cause which induced this step on his part, I was delighted with the idea of going back to old Virginia, and so I readily agreed to his proposition, without paying any particular attention to his remarks about the opportunity the change would afford me of marrying some one of my own station, equal in birth and fortune.

"We set out at the time appointed, and I had a very pleasant trip of it. My uncle became very indulgent as we progressed eastward, and seemed disposed to gratify all my wishes. We visited Philadelphia, New York, the Saratoga Springs, and even the Falls of Niagara, before we turned southward. He took me to balls, theatres, concerts, &c., and really seemed to be anxious for me to contract an 'eligible match,' as he termed it. But I fell in love with nobody—and if any one fell in love with me, I never heard of it. And as for the places of amusement, you know I have no partiality for them. I always enjoyed myself much better on Sundays at church. You have no idea, Luke, how I was charmed to find myself within the walls of a real church again. I was baptized and reared in this (the Episcopal) church, and have an inextinguishable affection for it.

"At last we reached Virginia, and as I was never partial to the country, I obtained the consent of my uncle to board in this pleasant city. I had not been located here more than a month before I ascertained, for the first time, the

cause of my removal to the east. One of my servant women, living with uncle Edgar, who is the laundress of his family, and whom I had taught to read, discovered your letter to me in the pocket of my uncle's vest. She saw it was addressed to me, and determined I should have it. So when she came to town on the ensuing Saturday to bring my clothes, she handed it to me. Of course it explained everything—the reason of my removal, my uncle's anxiety for me to make an 'eligible match,' my pleasant tour, and all. I am really obliged to you for all this kindness, and you have my sincere thanks.

"But why should your innocent epistle produce such a commotion with my uncle? You have never made a declaration of love to me, nor have I ever breathed or written a word which might lead any one to suppose that I had a passion for you. We have merely corresponded as friends. We have been associates, it is true, and have esteemed each other. Because I did not drop your acquaintance, like some others, when misfortune reduced your family from affluence, I don't see why they should suppose I intended to marry you. I have some pride of family, as well as my uncles; but I cannot perceive anything derogatory in reciprocating the friendship of a schoolmate who happens to be poor, so long as he aspires to rise in the world by industry, and rectitude of moral conduct.

"Your letter to me did not demand a reply, and perhaps it would have been forgotten by both of us by this time, if my uncle had given it to me and said nothing about it. Perhaps by this time we might have forgotten one another, and you would have ultimately married (as you probably will), that brazen Miss Polly something, whom your brother has written about to Kentucky, and I might have formed an 'eligible match,' some of these days, to the entire 'con-

tentation,' as Queen Elizabeth would say, of my very particular brace of uncles. But I do not like to be watched, suspected, and kept in leading-strings, as if I were incapable of conducting myself with propriety; and so I have a disposition to give my uncles a taste of my quality—by refusing every match they make for me, and finally to choose for myself, provided I should ever marry.

"Now I do not propose to marry *you*—understand that. But you are good-looking enough to be a *beau*, and your studies, incessantly pursued, have made you an intelligent correspondent. Now if you were only, through conviction, a member of *the church*, I could hold free converse with you—and if you were so disposed, *I would do so*, in spite of my uncles. I will do so, as it is, to a limited extent, provided you will read the works I enjoin. And what is more, without farther preface, I *tender* you my promise not to consent to any 'eligible match,' before I see you—not meaning that there is any probability of ever making a bargain 'for better, for worse' with you. But I like the idea of a correspondence, and it will afford me great pleasure to hear of your success in everything you undertake. And rest assured that, notwithstanding I have some of the 'high notions' of my uncles in regard to families, I shall never consider any honorable pursuit, by which you may acquire wealth, as disgraceful, or as rendering you unworthy of my esteem. Be industrious, be honorable, and, if possible, be religious, is the counsel of your old friend, BLANCHE."

I lost no time in replying to this epistle. No doubt I went far beyond the limits of a formal, friendly correspondence, for I believed myself pretty deeply in love with *Blanche*. I informed her of my continued success in bus

ness, and of my purpose to visit Philadelphia that winter. I requested her to address her next letter to the care of Messrs. Y. S. & K., importers of hardware, Philadelphia, and upon its reception, provided she approved it, I proposed to pay her a visit at Norfolk.

I took especial care to instruct Isaac in the mode of competing with Moses during my absence; and he was not difficult to teach, for he, too, had already resolved to become a successful merchant. All his thoughts, all his aspirations, centered in the one object—and of course there was no such word as failure in his vocabulary. The Jew was not long in perceiving his aptitude for business, his acumen in discovering and frustrating stratagems, which dispelled his hopes of again acquiring "the lead" while I was away.

The winter that year was as remarkably warm as the one preceding it had been remarkably cold, and my departure was delayed in consequence until about the first of February, as it was probable I should then be enabled to go most of the distance by water, which would be the most speedy, economical and pleasant mode of travel. At length I set out on horseback for St. Louis, in company with several merchants from the neighboring counties. I was young, full of hope, and ought to have been perfectly happy. But I was not. My spirit was too much imbued with the romantic notions and artificial distinctions imparted by the mass of pernicious works I had read in the clerk's office in Kentucky. I had a lingering contempt for the means I was under the necessity of employing to acquire wealth. I foolishly made a distinction between laboring for money in my present vocation, and bartering one's services to rogues for fees in a learned profession. The aristocratic Beauforts considered the one not quite respectable, and

the other altogether honorable; and, at times, my restless fancy was too much disposed to concur with them. But Blanche did not accord with her family in opinion; at least she had never been known to make any such distinctions. I say I ought to have been happy—as perfectly happy as it is possible for one to be on earth. I had with me sufficient money to discharge every debt we owed in Philadelphia. I had made money, and my prospect was good for making a speedy competence. I was respected in the community where I dwelt, and associated on terms of perfect equality with the highest and best of the population. Then why should I call up in imagination other societies, other classes, of more refined manners and more luxurious habits, and endure voluntary unhappiness because fortune had denied me access to them? It was simply because there had not always been a proper Mentor at my side to place in my hands the right kind of books. It demonstrated the fact that an immense amount of injury is perpetrated by the indiscriminate dissemination of works of pure fiction. Such works may serve to amuse, and some written by authors of common sense, may impart instruction; but a majority of them are very apt to plant an immedicable thorn in the breast of the young reader, to rankle and plague him during the remainder of his life. It matters not how exalted may be one's origin, or affluent his circumstances; he must be doomed to tumble down, on many occasions, from his fancied eminence, and grovel on the earth with the rest of the worms of creation; and if his nerves are destined to be shocked on viewing the ordinary pursuits of life, he is quite likely to suffer a larger quantity of misery, attributable to his fallacious notions of lofty gentility, than the humblest laborer who toils for his daily wages. *That there* are—that there must be distinctions

in society, cannot be denied, and ought not to be deprecated. The superior gifts and acquirements of mind, the undeviating adherence to the principles of honor and morality, must always, and should ever, exalt certain individuals above the common herd that may be found destitute of such qualities. But to suppose that a man should be assigned a low degree in the scale of respectability, solely because he is under the necessity of prosecuting an honest pursuit to secure a maintenance, is altogether absurd and ridiculous. That such groundless supposition does prevail in certain communities, is well known to all. But it is an evil that might be corrected by example. It is true the accomplished and refined could obtain no reciprocity of enjoyment in the society of the honest ignorant; nor can such an association be required. But they could recognize the claims to respectability of those who become as intelligent as themselves, and as subservient to correct principle, notwithstanding their occupations, of whatsoever kind they may be. They should disdain to reproach any one for his business pursuits, provided they be lawful and not injurious to public morals. There is a distinction without much difference, between acquiring a fortune by honest industry one's self, and subsisting on a fortune so acquired by one's father or grandfather. There are but few—very few, indeed—families of wealth and pretension in this country, which have not produced their mechanics and men of business. Therefore, the man who denounces as disreputable any of the useful occupations, is very apt to be casting a stigma upon some member of his own family, and perhaps the very one to whom he is indebted for everything he possesses.

When we arrived at St. Louis, the river was open, and *in fine navigable* order. A large number of merchants

met there on their way to the east; and western merchants, wherever they meet, are acquaintances and friends; so we were all perfectly "at home" together. We met on board the splendid new steamer, Princess Victoria, which was to start the next morning at seven o'clock. There was one merchant, however, disappointed in his expectations of going along with us. This was a gentleman of experience, and wherever he was, always had business to attend to up to the last moment. We all regretted that he was left behind, which occurred in the following manner. After coming on board, paying for his passage, and depositing his trunk in his state room (they had just begun to construct state rooms), he turned to Captain Swan, and addressed him as follows:

"Captain, you start at seven o'clock, A. M. to-morrow?"

"At seven o'clock *precisely*," replied the captain.

"You mean seven o'clock, P. M., *as usual*, I suppose, captain, which will allow me to do all my running about."

"I mean what I say, stranger," said the captain, very coolly. "It is not usual with *me* to speak *positively*, when I don't intend to act up to my words. Captain Swan is not like some other captains you may have met with. I say seven o'clock, A. M. At that hour I advise you to have your corpse on board ready to start." Saying this, the captain hobbled (he was lame) on shore, and gave some directions to the hands that were rolling in freight.

"I never knew a single captain in my life," said friend F., as the master of the boat turned away, "to push off at the time named—and if this one starts at the hour appointed, he will be very apt to leave 'my corpse' behind."

And so he did. By six o'clock the next morning the Princess had her steam up, and black columns of smoke rose from her gigantic chimneys, while the engineers be-

low kept up such an incessant hissing and "fizzing" of steam, that no one could hear himself speak on the boiler-deck, where we were all seated. *Precisely* at the time appointed, Captain Swan gave the word to "let go," which was promptly obeyed, and a few "licks back" extricated us from the crowd of steamers lining the busy wharf—busy even then, but an illimitable beehive now.

But instead of steering down the stream, the pilot turned her bow up, and we ran about a mile above the city, and then turned round and went past under a full head of steam, to show the good people who stared at us the capabilities of the glorious Princess. The spray flew up six feet high from our cut-water, and a terrible commotion was kicked up behind us, almost throwing some of the smaller craft out on the shore. When we got just opposite the wharf we had left, a couple of small cannons were fired off, the flags were run up, and a band of music on the hurricane deck struck up "The Star Spangled Banner." We now beheld our friend F. running down the broad quay, waving a white handkerchief for us to stop. He called aloud, no doubt, but we could not hear him—he beckoned, in every variety of attitude; and we saw him very plainly—but we could nowhere find the captain. We—the western merchants—being of one mind, and of one will, would have caused the captain to stop and send ashore for him; but, as I have said, that functionary had disappeared, and could nowhere be found. At length, when we had gone some six miles, we perceived the captain coming up from below, with an air of perfect ignorance of what had transpired. He was sorry we had not found him; and even then said he would go back if we insisted upon it—such being the potential influence of our class—but this was rather much *to require at his hands*, and so we continued on our career,

hoping our friend would overtake us on another boat at Louisville.

Among the passengers on board, I may be pardoned for giving the true initials of some of them, as it has been a long time ago, and they were all creditable pioneers in their line, and deserve, from a career of usefulness and merited success, to be held in remembrance by those who have succeeded them, and subsequently built upon the broad and substantial foundations laid down by them. First, there was Mr. G. C., the gentleman in manners, the genius in financial and business operations, and the benefactor of honest, enterprising young men. His features were regular and handsome—barring a nose somewhat long—his eyes were the very orbs of intelligence, and his lips expressed his marked characteristics of benevolence and generosity. But even then the pallor of feeble health rested upon his face, and the locks about his temples were beginning to be salted and peppered by the hand of unsparing time. His physical system was too weak for his vigorous intellect, and the wear and tear of the thousand horse power of the machinery of his mind threatened to shatter his hull to pieces. By forcible restraints on his genius, and by confining his enterprises in business channels to prudent limitations, he has fortunately been able to keep his "corpse" erect even until this day. That he acquired a fortune, as it was, is known to all the banks of any magnitude in the Union, where his autograph is quite familiar, and respected as it deserves to be; but if his body had only been equal to his mind, there is but little doubt that his acquisitions—honest and honorable ones in every instance—would have sounded his fame to every quarter of the globe. There was Mr. L., self-possessed, amiable, quiet and easy in his manners, and always meditating some-

thing new for the benefit of the state, as well as for his own profit. Unfortunately, his mind ran in advance of the necessities of the time; and, as is generally the case with those who introduce novel objects of usefulness, this projector was destined to share the fate of many illustrious predecessors. But still he accomplished much good in his days of prosperity. So long as he confined his energies to mercantile pursuits, he continued to reap a rich reward; and he had the gratification of successfully establishing in business a great number of enterprising young men in that new country. Next, there was Mr. M. P., a gentleman of portly form, and undoubted genius—as pioneers generally are—but who possessed the invaluable faculty of confining all his thoughts and operations to a single, uniform line of business, and of course he *had* to grow rich. There was Mr. St**ly, of calm, mild, but thoughtful aspect. He was meditating expeditions beyond the borders of civilization, which were afterwards triumphantly accomplished, and he is now enjoying the fruits of his active life in peaceful retirement with an independent fortune. There was Col. O., who was to become the associate of the last named, and to acquire a still larger fortune, and finally to fall a victim on the field of battle. There was Col. M., of unusual vivacity and extraordinary conversational powers, who subsequently retired in independence, after pursuing a uniform course of business. He became chief magistrate of the state. There was Mr. C. F. J., the happy lover of humor in others, and affording a constant fund of it himself, but at the same time a most enlightened man of business, and the most accomplished chirographer I ever met with. Tall, handsome, and extremely affable, it is no wonder that *when he retired* with an ample fortune, an unusual degree *of popularity* should keep him constantly in the councils

of the state, and elevate him to the chair of the Assembly. There were E. M. S., H. R., Mr. H***es (subsequently an M. C.), Col. T., besides quite a number of others, most of whom became men of fortune, and achieved other enviable distinctions. There were those, of course, who formed exceptions to this list—men who were not adapted to their business, and failed in it; and others, who were qualified, but lacked the perseverance, to pursue any line of policy long enough to arrive at a desirable result. But every one of them, so far as I am informed, who pursued the legitimate business of a merchant, without being enticed aside into other channels of ill-considered speculation, met with certain success, and reaped a rich reward for all their toils and privations. And so it is to this day. The western merchant who perseveres in the single appropriate line of his business, is absolutely sure of succeeding in his object. It is the man—and pretty much that man alone—who deviates from his legitimate career, and in his eagerness to amass wealth before he has earned it, and before he is entitled to it, embarks in wild speculations which promise splendid returns *on paper*, but which are rarely to be realized on the *counter*, that becomes bankrupt. These facts (let no one consider them fictions) should be well considered by the young merchants of the west. They are applicable now, and will be applicable in all time to come; and if the admonition be kindly received, and the hint be acted upon, the experience of the past will unquestionably produce its benefits in the future.

During our passage, various means were resorted to to pass the time pleasantly. The nights were spent by too many of us at the card table. Even the oldest and the gravest of the company did not hesitate to take a turn at brag or *poker; and none, I* believe, were exempted from eucher, *whist, backgammon* and checkers. Such, at that time, was

the universal practice—and so long as none but men of character and honor participated, there was not much injury done to the purses of the unskillful; for amusement, not gain, was the object. But when gamblers by profession made the cabins of the steamers the scenes of their depredations, it was quite different with those who ventured to indulge in sports of such questionable morality. Many a young merchant was doomed to pay the penalty of his rash gratifications, by finding himself completely relieved of the funds destined to discharge his debts in the east. But any one who travels on the western waters at this day, needs not to be informed by me that this evil practice has been, if not quite altogether, at least to a very great extent, reformed.

But our days were spent differently. We were in the habit of assembling on the boiler deck, for the purpose of conversing on matters of amusement and information. We resolved ourselves into a kind of Western Congress, Mr. C., of St. Charles, by spontaneous request, always in the chair. Here the experienced merchants met to discuss matters of expediency for the future, deduced from incidents of the past, the relation of which was often mingled with diverting anecdotes. The young merchants, who were making their first visit to the east, kept in the back ground, as mere listeners (when not especially desired to speak), to the lessons of instruction calculated for our edification.

I recollect distinctly the first morning we assembled in this manner; there were perhaps twenty of us seated, forming a half circle, with the president in the centre, at the apex, like the leader of a flock of wild geese. Each had a cigar in his mouth, and his heels on the railing in front. There was no sun—but the weather was mild and refreshing, as we were fanned by the early spring breezes coming

up the broad "father of rivers," from the soft clime of the orange and lemon, the magnolia and myrtle. There was no fog; but a slight curling mist rose from the placid surface of the stream, and vanished in thin air before it reached to any considerable height.

The subject first discussed was the best policy of purchasing goods in the east. Some contended that it was best to purchase of a succession of new houses, while others maintained that the proper mode was to confine one's dealing to a few well selected firms, whose character for regularity and fairness was established. This was edifying to such of us as were making our first visit. A representative from Palmyra (the appellation of representative was borne by each of us), maintained the first proposition.

"There was a new house established," said he, "last year, with which I made a bill that pleased me; and in proof that I did a little better with it than I did, or than any one could do, with the old established firms, I have only to say that they sold me the "apple ʒ" brown cottons a quarter of a cent below the usual price. It is true the amount saved by the purchase, was no great thing; but it demonstrates the fact that a new house is willing to put up with smaller profits, at first, until it has obtained a regular set of customers."

"Will the gentleman from Palmyra," said the member from Lexington, who took the other side, "permit me to ask him a question?"

"It is strictly in order," said the chairman.

"Certainly," said the Palmyra delegate.

"Then the gentleman will be good enough to state whether he bought any other goods from the new house, and if so, what they were, and the prices."

"I did make a general bill with it," replied the Palmyrian, "and I was pleased with every article I purchased. For one thing, I remember that I purchased a few pieces of a new article, just introduced, called 'Grecianade,' for gentlemen's wear. I gave twenty-five cts. per yard for it, and sold it readily for fifty cts. I did not ask the price of it at the old houses—perhaps the gentleman can inform me what they asked for it?"

"I can," said the gentleman from Lexington, triumphantly. "They asked only twenty-three cts. for the same goods!" This was followed by a round of applause. "But this is not all: I, too, was induced to make a small bill with the new house. I did very well, I must confess, with the articles selected. But I selected none of their 'Grecianade,' nor anything else that I was not quite familiar with. They *attempted* to sell me cloths and other goods ten per cent. higher than I paid for them elsewhere. It takes quite a good judge of goods, and a better one than I profess to be, to detect an excess of a few cents or a few shillings in the yard, on goods of value. The 'tallest' merchant will frequently get beyond his depth in Market St., or Pearl St., and then it is better to depend upon an old friend, who has never been known to deceive, than a new man, and an entire stranger. By taking considerable pains, examining the tickets, &c., I found out that the cloths of the new firm for which I was asked $5 00 per yard, were a portion of the same invoice they asked only $4 50 for at R.'s, S. P. & Co.'s, G., C. & Co.'s, B.'s, M. N.'s, J. N. & L. D.'s, O. & T.'s, &c. &c. So when I wandered from the old beaten track, I made sure of having my foot on firm bottom. I never buy goods of strangers, unless I am familiar with *their quality and* value. Then I run no risk."

"*That's all* very well," said a member from Columbia;

"but still something may be said against confining one's self too long to certain old houses. If they become too confident of selling you all the goods you want, it is natural for them to adhere to their tip top prices. It is with them as it is with us. When certain descriptions of goods decline in the market, they are very apt to exact the old figures, if they suppose there is no probability of their customers getting information of the reduction. Competition is fair with them, as it is with us. Our customers always derive advantage from the competition we have in our towns. They are under no obligation to give us more for our goods than they can be had for of our neighbors. And so with the eastern merchant. It is true there is more *safety* in the old houses—they will not be likely to impose on a customer, as strangers sometimes do, when they can get a good chance. Nevertheless, a new firm will offer inducements not to be despised. To establish a business, they are willing to put up with smaller profits than the rich old houses; and it is our interest to avail ourselves of all such advantages. I am done, now, and if no one else desires to speak, I call for a decision."

The speaker decided every question; that was the rule: and there was no appeal from his decision. In this case, he decided thus: "It is always best to look before you leap—that is the old saying; and it is as applicable now as when it was first uttered. I have no doubt the first gentleman lost by his precipitate confidence about as much as the second gained by his prudence; and that the new house came off 'more than even' by the operation. I think the last gentleman who spoke, hit the mark. Where one must depend upon the candor of the house he is dealing with, it is better to rely upon those whose representations have before been proved to be correct. But when one is perfectly competent to judge for himself, it is we

to look about him, and buy of those who offer the best bargains. But one thing I beg to impress upon the very young gentlemen who have never been in the east. It is this: every merchant there, as well as in the west, follows his business for the purpose of making money. I have never met with a merchant who sold goods exclusively for the benefit of his customers. And when you are told that certain houses are selling all kinds of goods lower than anybody else can afford to sell them, don't believe a word of it—for, upon inquiry, you will ascertain that such firms possess no greater capital than their neighbors, and pay equally as much for their goods. So if they are particularly extravagant in their declarations that they can afford to sell, and will sell, at cost, or lower than cost, beware of them! Buy of them staple goods, that you know all about, if they insist upon it; but never venture where you can't touch bottom. Confidence in another is a plant of slow growth. And until it is so grown and proved—examined and checked off, in mercantile phrase—it is best to be reserved and cautious. These merchants may talk about friendship, and of an ardent disposition to subserve your interests; but in business transactions, pretty generally, the design of the parties, mutually, is to realize the most they can from each other. Such is the motive, even when excessive assurances of attachment, kind feeling, and all that, are made."

The next topic was introduced by a member from Fayette.

"Gentlemen," said he, "no doubt you all have your 'brag' houses in Philadelphia, and I have mine. I have tried all the houses you have alluded to; and without having *anything special* to allege against any of them, I can bear *witness, particularly* of the fairness and trust-worthiness *of my favorite* firm — Messrs. Keen, Cunning & Co. I

have bought goods of them for three years, and every time I return, they give me new evidences of their rectitude and liberality."

Here he paused a moment, being interrupted by a buzz that went round the company. A majority of the merchants present simultaneously uttered declarations of their admiration of the house alluded to, and I made a memorandum of it, as one I was resolved to make a bill with.

"I will tell," continued the gentleman, "why it is my 'brag' house. All houses are liable to make mistakes in the hurry of business—but this one never hesitates to correct an error, and it is always done in a handsome manner. Last year, when I went on, I carried with me my last invoices, in which were two pieces of cloth charged—one black, one blue, and each worth about fifty dollars. I told them the blue never came to hand. That was enough. My word was sufficient. They were satisfied. They handed me fifty dollars, thanked me for giving them an opportunity to correct the error, and protested that they would always correct such errors with pleasure. And that was not all. Upon farther inquiry, they said their young man had by mistake put the cloth in the box of another merchant, who had not yet informed them of it, but had simply, and most dishonestly, paid only for the goods in his bill. I asked them if they did not intend to make the man pay them for the cloth. They said no; they could afford to lose it, and they would do so rather than expose the fellow."

To my surprise, this speech was followed by a profound silence, instead of the applause I looked for. The chairman smiled mysteriously, and called upon the rest to say what they knew of the house in question, intimating that when

they were all done, he would have a few words to utter in relation to it, as he was well acquainted with its character. But they all seemed disposed to prolong the silence.

"Come, gentlemen," said the chairman, "I am very *anxious* to speak; but it is against the rule for me to do so until you are all done. I call upon the gentleman from Boonville to speak next."

"Well, then," said the Boonville member, "if I must speak out, I shall have 'to acknowledge the corn,' to make use of a very vulgar expression too often repeated in polite company. I have been 'chiseled,' to use another refined term in our vocabulary. The amount, I don't know, nor do I care much about it; but the *fact* that I was so 'green,' —another familiar word—is what stings me somewhat, I must confess."

"I'm in for it, too!" said the gentleman from Fulton.

"And I," exclaimed the most of them, one after another, in quick succession. To my utter astonishment, the same kind of a mistake had occurred with each of them at the same house; and in every instance, it had been a piece of blue cloth, or some other indispensable article in a western assortment of goods at that day, and which each one supposed he had bought remarkably low. I will not, of course, make any attempt to repeat even the simple anathemas that were uttered. The compound ones, and the new ones invented for the occasion, would be altogether beyond my powers of description. But still I was slow to comprehend the cause of such a reversion of sentiment. The wonder with me was why they did not rather sympathize with Messrs. Keen, Cunning & Co. The money, in every instance, had been quite promptly refunded; and, if I understood the gentleman, the goods had been packed in the boxes belonging to others, who were not so ready to correct the error. The loss

of Messrs. Keen, Cunning & Co., thought I, must have been considerable.

"Now, gentlemen," said the chairman, "it is my time to speak. Messrs. Keen, Cunning & Co. played off the same game upon me several years ago. But I found them out, and left them. Of course the plan was successful with me, and would have been to this day, had not one of their young men, who had been discharged, revealed the secret. He said the mistake was designedly made. The goods left out, were too valuable for their customers not to miss them. And when his money was promptly and cheerfully refunded, it was natural for the customer to conceive a high estimate of the honor and justice of the house, and to deal more liberally and confidingly with it than ever. He said the firm hardly ever lost a customer, as their overcharges were skillfully made on such descriptions of goods as rendered discovery difficult, if not impossible."

I may here state—that no one shall suppose such a house exists in Philadelphia at this day—that Messrs. Keen, Cunning & Co.'s business was extremely light that season. As they had made arrangements for a large business, and as there was "tightness" in the money market when their notes fell due, they failed.

The next topic was the relative merits of New York and Philadelphia. But as only a few of our party had been in the habit of visiting the first-named city, the subject was soon referred to the chairman for his irrevocable decision.

"I must give Philadelphia the preference, gentlemen, until some reforms are introduced in New York. Prices must necessarily be irregular in every city—but then there is not quite as much regularity in the system of transacting business, not the same uniformity of habits among the jobbers in New York, that we find in Philadelphia. There

are more sharpers, more Shylocks, more impostors in the one than the other. Such is the general belief in Missouri, at all events, founded upon experience. There are doubtless a vast number of houses in New York equal in every respect to any we find in Philadelphia, and it would be exceedingly wrong to confound the good with the bad; but how can strangers discriminate between them? When I first made purchases in New York, as well as several of my friends who began there at the same time, although some of our bills gave us very great satisfaction, we invariably found that we had been imposed on in others.—Several years passed before we fell in with the right kind of houses. A number of the jobbers there go upon the principle that it is best to procure a constant succession of new purchasers; and, never expecting to sell goods to the same man twice, they resolve to make the most of him while they have a chance. Of course he suffers 'some;' and he is very apt to confound the innocent with the guilty, in his subsequent denunciations. Now, in Philadelphia, the substantial fair-dealing firms form a kind of fraternity to uphold one another; and by unanimity of action, having in a measure the control of money matters, they are enabled to keep out, or put out of the trade, most of the dishonest and disqualified interlopers, who would perpetrate a stigma on the fair name of the city. Besides, Philadelphia is nigher to us, and the charges for transportation thence, are not so high as they are from New York. While upon this subject, I beg to caution my young friends against one species of imposition constantly practised in New York on strangers. No doubt some of you, gentlemen, will visit that great city to gratify your curiosity, if nothing else. I will illustrate by an anecdote, from which you will deduce the warning. I have always been considered somewhat

cautious, and rarely have been taken in by impostors. For years I have been in the habit of laughing at my young friends, who will, in despite of all the cautions contained in the newspapers, persist in buying false watches at the auctions in New York. It was only last spring that I met with three of my western friends in Broadway, who had been cheated at one of these swindling concerns the year before. I joined them in a stroll, and we searched for the *gentleman* of whom they had made their purchases. I wanted to see the rascal made an example of. We found the house, but there was a different name on the sign. The present occupant could give us no information in relation to the retired auctioneer. But he would sell us genuine gold lever watches: and as there were some half dozen men besides our party in the room, he held up one and began to cry away at a tremendous rate. Some one started it at fifteen dollars, and it was run up to forty dollars, when the bidding ceased. 'Take it, sir; examine it for yourself,' said he, handing it to me. I thought I would look at it, merely out of idle curiosity. Now, I profess to be a tolerable judge of a watch. I opened it. It was a good lever, extra jeweled. The case was eighteen carat gold. The watch was a valuable one. I could not be mistaken. It was altogether different from those in the pockets of my friends. I bid forty-five dollars for it carelessly, still holding it in my hand. 'It is yours, sir, and the cheapest watch that ever was bought,' said the auctioneer, taking it from my hand. 'Here, boy, take this watch back to the desk. Follow him, sir, and upon your paying the clerk there, it will be delivered to you. I cannot take the money for it, or I would deliver it here.' I followed the boy, keeping my eye on the watch. But as we progressed backwards, it grew darker, there being no window behind.

When I came to the man at the desk, he was writing by the light of a candle. He presented a bill, received the money, and delivered the watch. It seemed to be the same one; and as I had watched its course pretty narrowly, I put it in my pocket, satisfied it had not been changed for another. But we had not walked away forty paces, before I thought I would give it a cursory inspection by sun-light. Bah! I perceived the cheat at once! It had been changed in its progress to the desk, before my eyes, and I had now a gilded thing not worth ten dollars. I paused, almost in a passion. My first impulse was to go back and confront the swindlers. But the laughter of my friends, whom I had been quizzing for their obtuseness, in suffering themselves to become the victims of such sharpers, was so just a retaliation, and my conduct had been so inconsiderate in venturing to cast a bid at all for any article whatever in an establishment of rogues, that I resolved to stand rebuked, as the just penalty of my rashness. Thus, gentlemen, is one more liable to be swindled in New York, than in Philadelphia. The influential business men in the latter city would not permit such establishments to exist two days in any of their business thoroughfares. They give a whole city a bad name, and inflict an incalculable injury upon it. From what I have said, you may infer it is my opinion that the young merchant, particularly, is safest in the hands of the old-established and long tried houses of Philadelphia. For my part, I am now in the habit of visiting New York as well as Philadelphia, and derive advantage from it. I buy there of men whom I know to be as conscientious as any others elsewhere; and as I make it an invariable rule to buy no article without first making myself pretty well acquainted with its value, I do not often have reason to complain of being over-reached. I perceive no material

difference in the prices between the two cities; but I am sometimes enabled to obtain a greater variety of styles by purchasing in both."

The next topic was "drumming and boring." The speakers were unanimous in their condemnation of the practice; and many of them related instances of their harsh treatment of the young men who pursued them for their custom. The chairman being called upon for his decision, paused, and with a smile turned to one of the company who had not hitherto uttered a word, and demanded, as he had a right to do by the rules, that he should first express himself on the subject. This gentleman was from a place in the southwestern part of the state, without a name. No town had yet been christened in his section. He was located at a mill, on some river, and had his store under the same roof. But he supplied the people with goods for fifty miles round, and was growing rich. This representative of that wild region deserves to be particularly noticed. His name was Elijah Sage. His form was slight, his face pale with ill health; and although he was not thirty years of age, his locks were quite gray. He was hardly ever known to smile—he had never been seen to laugh. He was repulsive at first sight to a stranger; but all who knew him well appreciated the genuine benevolence of his heart, which was fated to be concealed under a sour and crabbed exterior. Whether it was the result of disease and suffering, or that he had discovered a philosophy of his own—for he was known to be a profound student of human nature, and deeply versed in history—which caused him to disapprove of almost everything done by others, and to dissent from almost every opinion expressed, both by public men and private individuals, was a matter of conjecture; but, that *such was his habit*, none who were in his society could

deny. Men were often vexed and annoyed by his contradictions when they succeeded in getting him to participate in their debates; but when they reflected that he never obtruded his opinions on them, they felt bound to tolerate his eccentricities, as they were termed. Elijah not only thought and spoke, but he likewise acted, differently from other men. When other merchants were deterred by financial panics from purchasing as extensively as they had designed doing, he said nothing, and bought the more extensively in consequence. When others were made confident and bold by the favorable aspect of the times, he became timid and cautious. Nevertheless, his *invariable success* procured for him, and with no ill-founded reason, the reputation of having the gift of penetration, and a more than ordinary genius for business. He had a long nose, as most men of genius have.

"I differ from all of you," said he, responding to the call reluctantly, "in regard to the 'borers and drummers.' Of course, when they come about me at the hotel, I believe just as much as I please of their professions and promises. But still, I sometimes meet them the next day at their employers' establishments, and pick up good bargains among them. I have done it often, and expect to do it again. Besides, they display their activity in exhibiting every description of goods they have; and it often occurs that they show me an article not in my memorandum, which I need, and which I can make money on. So it is mere nonsense to condemn them. They can't force any one to buy. They do all the labor, showing you their goods; and it costs you nothing merely to stand, or sit, as I generally do, and look on. Then, where is the imposition or wrong they do? *For my part,* I like to see them. I like their eagerness and *anxiety to supply* my wants. It is my business to see that

they do not sell me anything I don't want, or at too high a price. If I was compelled to believe everything they say, and to purchase everything they insist on my taking, it would be a different thing. The man who has not the resolution to say *no*, when an article he does not want is offered him, had better keep away from the city, and pay some one else who can, to buy his goods for him. It is an easy thing for me to listen to their speeches over their cases of goods, and then simply reply that they are not the kind I want, or that the prices don't suit me. That is an end of it. They may return to the charge, and pour out a volley of new arguments, a mere puff of wind, which can hurt nobody; but still it is just as easy to remain unmoved as not. If they should seem to be offended at my incredulity, that is no matter of mine. They may get pleased again, if it so please them; if not, there is no harm done to me. The fact is, if they did not find poor weak fools at the hotels, whom they can twist and turn as they please, their importunity would never be complained of; and in nine cases out of ten, when you hear western men abusing or ridiculing them, you may safely suppose that they have on some occasion been weak enough to become their worthy dupes." Here there was a writhing among the company, and a moment after, it was succeeded by a loud burst of laughter. Elijah continued, without any perceptible change in his rigid features: "In regard to the employers of those abused young men, and the conduct of the young men themselves, I consider the practice altogether justifiable, and, indeed, commendable. They seek to establish or to extend a business. Who of us will hesitate to do the same thing, in our little pitiful and contemptible spheres? Who of us can cast the first stone? If they pulled you into *their stores and* robbed you by main force, you could not

make a greater outcry against them; while at the same time, if you would confess the truth, those among you who abuse them the most, would acknowledge that their attentions never fail to flatter your vanity. Your abuse of them is only a mode you have of boasting of your standing and importance in the city. The practice is rather agreeable than otherwise to the western man, inasmuch as it is better to have a friendly recognition on entering an establishment in quest of any article, however insignificant, than to address cold, formal strangers, who may not know that you are a western merchant. Besides, men of the best business qualifications, of honor, and capital, when embarking in business, employ these young men, as well as houses of the reverse character; and I venture to assert that our acquaintance with two of every three houses to which we give preference, commenced through the very means we are so apt to condemn. I am done. Decide, Mr. Chairman."

The chairman decided that, as he was unable to determine the matter, he would leave every one to the enjoyment of his own opinion. Elijah nodded his assent, with something like an air of triumph.

The next subject was one which interested me much. It was in relation to the social intercourse between the western men and the city merchants.

Each one had something to say of the hospitable attentions he had received, or something to complain of in the neglect of those who, while professing to be his friends when selling him goods, had cast him off as soon as they had pumped his pocket dry.

When they were all done, the chairman again demanded *an opinion from* Mr. Sage.

"*My opinion is,*" said Elijah, "that those who are wor-

thy of social intercourse, and have anything really attractive about them, may, if they be so disposed, find admission to the private circles of their acquaintances anywhere. But we, who are in the habit of living in the woods or wild prairies, seem to forget that habits and customs in cities are essentially different from those of the people we associate with; and hence our reproaches and sneers at what we are pleased to denominate their aristocracy, when we see a well-dressed company invited to a party, from which we, in our coarse boots, huge blanket coats, foxy caps, and long beards, are excluded. What kind of a figure would we cut, if we were admitted? We may affect to despise dress as much as we please; (Elijah was neatly dressed;) but if we should find ourselves, in our coarse costumes, in some magnificent saloon, surrounded by splendidly attired ladies and gentlemen, there is not one of us but would feel overwhelmed with shame and confusion. And why would we have such painful feelings? Because the ladies were too fair, and the gentlemen too effeminate or foppish? No; but simply because we had neglected to make as genteel an appearance as the rest of them. If the gratification of being present on such occasions does not compensate for the expenditure it would require to dress as well as the rest of the company, it is our duty to stay away, even if an invitation be tendered us. Most of our pleasures and desires are merely creatures of the fancy. Our ordinary clothing is the common apparel in the country we inhabit, and attracts no particular attention; but it is offensive, and naturally and justly offensive in places where a better description is universally worn. In my country, I once knew an eastern gentleman to come nigh being mobbed for wearing a rich Spanish cloak, when everybody else wore blankets *and buckskins.* He was hooted at and insulted by our

young men, partly, perhaps, because the girls smiled at him very graciously. In the city, they do not go that far—they let you enjoy your peculiar fancy unmolested. It is no aggression on their part, when they merely omit to invite your iron-nailed heels to cut their Brussels carpets, and the black quid in your mouth to find a place of deposit under their fine sofas." Here Elijah was interrupted by the unrestrained merriment of the company. About half of them were dressed in full Missouri costume, and three-fourths were tasting the weed.

"You need not suppose," continued Elijah, "that I can plead an exemption from the error of western men—I mean of a portion of them; for it is only a portion of them who persist in the error. I will give you an instance of the awkward predicaments to which I have been liable. The first time I went east, I determined to dress precisely as I had done at home—indeed, I wore the identical clothes I had been wearing for twelve months in the store. Well, nobody objected to my clothes in the houses I transacted business with. I bought a large stock of goods, and paid away a considerable sum of money. The merchants all treated me with marked respect, and complimented my judgment, while I, on my part, was satisfied with my purchases. As long as my ideas were confined to business, I did very well, and had no reason to complain of a want of politeness on the part of anybody. But when my business was done, being a young man, and having one or two idle days on my hands, I thought I would seek some innocent amusement and recreation. Then I began, as I thought, to discover some signs of this so much hated aristocracy—for a deaf ear was turned to all my hints. They were ready *and anxious to sell* me goods, while they had not a word to *say on any other* topic whatever. I returned to the hotel,

and abused that refinement and taste of the Philadelphians which I could not comprehend and appreciate. My friends joined me in maledictions, for most of them were in a similar predicament. In the evening I visited the theatre, in company with several of my western associates. We went early, to get good seats; and sure enough, when we got in, we found the house empty, for it was not quite dark. We cruised about, in quest of the best location, and finally pounced upon a box, the third from the stage on the left hand, and sat down on the front bench. We observed a ticket pinned to the cushion, with the name of 'Clear Brook' written on it. Mr. Brook was the merchant who had handled the largest portion of my money, and sold me the most of my goods—and all my companions knew him. So we thought ourselves fortunate in hitting upon his box, and did not doubt that he would take pleasure in entertaining us between the acts.

"The first scene passed off before Mr. Clear Brook and his company arrived. Indeed, I observed that nearly all the ticketed benches were unoccupied during the first scene; and upon inquiry I was informed that the fashionables never came early, and always retired after the first piece. But my particular friend, Mr. Clear Brook, did come at last; and he was accompanied by several fine gentlemen and ladies. The gentlemen wore spotless white kid gloves, and other finery to match. The ladies were decked in satin, laces, brilliants, etc. It was a gorgeous bevy; and the contrast between their glittering habiliments and our very shabby appearance was so palpable that we hung down our heads in shame. They paused at the door of the box, evidently not recognizing us. We abandoned the front bench for the ladies; but still there were hesitation and consultation among them. We looked for Mr. Brook to come

forward and speak to us, and to inform his gay company that we were western men, and not a party of the rowdies of the town. But he did no such thing. He merely gazed at us a moment through a gold mounted glass, held in his kid-covered hand, and then called for the box-keeper.

"This is my box, sir," said he to that personage; "I have taken the *whole box*, sir, and I desire you to clear it out for the exclusive use of my party." He spoke pretty loudly, and attracted the attention of many people in the vicinity, and especially in the pit, the latter looking up with delight, expecting to have a scene not in the bills. We became the centre of attraction for a brief space of time, and our situation was becoming intolerably uncomfortable. We stood up, turned round, and faced Mr. Brook, that he might recognize us immediately, and put an end to the embarrassment. We bowed. He remained stiff. He would not recognize us. The box-keeper was required to perform his duty, and we were unceremoniously thrust out, and the door was closed against us. Of course we came nigh bursting with rage and indignation; and when we procured back seats on the opposite side of the house, our mortification and anger were not diminished on perceiving that Mr. Brook's party did not occupy more than half the seats in the box we had been turned out of. We vowed vengeance, and we had it. This circumstance was narrated by so many that it spread all over the west, and seemed likely to cripple the concern in which Mr. Brook was a partner. He was compelled finally to go out of the concern, and was never able afterwards to get into another. But *we* were wrong—while his conduct was not so very reprehensible. It was incumbent on us to conform to the usages of the people among whom we thrust ourselves. It was inexcusable presumption in us to suppose we might,

without offence, and a breach of manners and good breeding, sit beside a party of fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen in muddy boots, and nappy blanket coats, which had been worn in the stage coaches, and been rubbed against all sorts of travelers. None of us were altogether deficient in that best kind of education, extensive reading and general information. We knew more of history, of the classics, of poets and plays, perhaps, than Mr. Clear Brook, or any of his party; it is probable, that, if a just balance sheet had been struck, we had quite as much money; and if we had been properly dressed—and there is a propriety of dress, as well as of speech and manners—it is probable we would have had a cheerful recognition, and a pleasant conversation with the young ladies. We were deprived of that happiness by our own stupidity and folly, and should have blamed no one but ourselves for the result."

When Mr. Sage was done speaking, the chairman, who always dressed genteelly, decided without hesitation that Elijah was right.

"Such is my decision, gentlemen," said he; "and I feel inclined to substantiate it by a few additional remarks. You have all observed, no doubt, that the well-dressed gentleman receives the first attentions of the servants at the hotels, and the best accommodations, without paying any more for them. On the contrary, he frequently pays less, as it is a greater satisfaction for a landlord, by good treatment, to induce a man of genteel appearance to become his regular customer, than one of shabby and disgusting exterior. Indeed, he receives the latter with reluctance; and, as he is indifferent about his returning, the probability is that he will make him pay a few dollars more than he charges the other, to deter him from coming back. So the shabby gentleman who travels much, may pay, in the course of a

year, in the way of extortions, while he has to put up at the same time with the meanest sort of accommodation, an extra sum fully sufficient to purchase a genteel suit of clothes. Besides, the eastern merchant will always feel a greater pleasure in waiting on a customer of genteel exterior, than one in semi-barbarous costume. He will walk the streets with the former himself, when it is necessary to conduct him to other places—whereas he will send his porter with the latter. The one passes along pleasantly and advantageously, commanding the respect and attention of those with whom he may have business to transact; the other is a mark for the assaults of the low and degraded, who suppose his intellects are on a par with his clothes, and thus he is a thousand times more liable to impositions and injuries than the first, besides the mortifications and affronts he meets with from the servants up to the proprietors."

"But I believe the western merchants are the best judges of human nature," said the representative from ———'s Mills, in my county.

"I differ from you," said Elijah.

"I know *you* differ from me," retorted the colonel, "as you differ from everybody, and in everything. But give your reasons."

"I have done so," replied Elijah, "in the matter of dress. It is human nature to make as fine an appearance as one's purse will afford. This is one of the legitimate enjoyments which wealth places in one's reach. How else can we enjoy the benefits of money than in eating, drinking, and wearing good clothes? If a man should keep a large pile of dollars by him merely to look at, and to guard against its *diminution, his* money would then become nothing more than *an expensive jewel*, a trinket, and manifestly as ridiculous

an extravagance as is perpetrated by the rich belle who wears a set of diamonds costing from one to fifty thousand dollars. It is one of the leading traits of human nature for a man to strive to excel his neighbor in *appearance;* and this can be done only by artificial means. It is the character of human nature to employ art to attain its ends. And we may boast as we will of our free and easy independence—but there is scarce one of us who does not feel a conscious inferiority when addressing an eastern man who is more genteel in his exterior than ourselves. Thus they are the best judges of human nature in their own spheres, as we may be in ours—and it is nothing more nor less than brute nature for us to suppose that the rough garments we wear on the prairies, and behind our counters, should escape without notice in the cities. No doubt the shaggy bear they keep at the Zoological Institute, thinks he cuts as fine a figure in Walnut Street as he did in the Ozark mountains. It is the nature of the brute."

"Then I propose that we are the best politicians, in the west," said the colonel, smiling.

"I differ from you," replied the imperturbable Elijah. "They have more papers, and are better posted in all kinds of political information. At the same time, I am willing to admit there is not much honesty or honor among the mere politicians, anywhere."

"Then, perhaps, you won't agree with me that ours is the best system of government ever instituted on earth?" inquired the colonel, who was a decided politician in inclination.

"No, I won't! and since you seem to urge it, I'll speak my sentiments boldly," replied Elijah, with a somewhat excited visage. "The American continent is at present *a vast harvest field,* in which there are but comparatively

few laborers. Each one sees the treasure scattered by a bountiful Providence around him, and he is intent only on seizing it for his own use. The majority know nothing, and care less, about the government, at present. But when the prizes are all appropriated, and the laborers shall be increased; when the avenues to speedy wealth shall be blocked up by dense masses, and few only be enabled to succeed,—then they will turn upon the government, and cast upon it all the blame of their disappointments. They will devise new governmental schemes to improve their condition, instead of relying upon their own honest exertions for success; they will pull down and set up institutions, and reforms, which can avail them nothing; and ultimately arrive at a glorious state of anarchy. If they succeed in enriching themselves at the expense of others, then the veriest democratical demagogues will immediately become the most obnoxious aristocrats in the world. This is human nature, too. But if they fail, which is quite likely, they will finally get a MASTER."

"Do you mean a king?" interposed the colonel, disdainfully.

"Ay, a king, emperor, autocrat, or any other term you may prefer. He will be, and must be, eventually a master. If the Union should become too unwieldy, it may fall to pieces—but then they may have a half dozen supreme potentates, instead of one."

"He's joking with you, colonel," said the member from Independence. "If you were to say that a monarchy was not the natural government for human beings, he would still differ from you."

"Yes, I would differ from him," responded Elijah, very gravely, while the whole company, the chairman included, uttered roars of laughter. "Yes, I would differ from him,"

continued Elijah; "and I would produce arguments deduced from the history of the world, to prove I was right. If you believe in scriptural testimony, you will, upon investigation, find that kings or patriarchal masters existed on the earth as far back as you can penetrate into the past, and at a time when the great Creator's direct interposition in the affairs of men was of frequent occurrence. The long line of Asiatic kings reigned with the concurrence of the Almighty. Whether in Persia or Egypt, the calamities He wrought were for the punishment of the iniquities of the *men*, and not for the vices inseparable from *kings*. He gave kings to the people himself, and they reigned with his express sanction; witness Saul, Solomon, and David, from whom Jesus, the 'king of the Jews,' and our blessed Mediator and Saviour, descended. If we explore profane history, we have the same result, viz: the incapacity of dense masses to exist long without a permanent supreme head or master. Much is said of Greece—but it produced its Philip and its Alexander. And where there were no kings in name, there were potentates in reality. Lycurgus was a great man, but he was uncle to the King of Sparta. The famous Amphictyonic confederacy was founded and conducted by kings, princes, nobles, and military chieftains; and the union was dissolved in consequence of 'geographical discriminations,' and all the tribes were subjugated by the Macedonian kings. Pisistratus, Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, Alcibiades, &c. &c., who are supposed, by the uninformed, to have been unadulterated Democrats, hardly accomplished anything when not masters of the people, and exercising almost supreme or sovereign authority. It is true they had a democracy at Athens, for a brief space; and then the demagogues and sycophants put So-

crates to death, because he had the wisdom to detect and the boldness to expose their corruptions. Then we had the warfare of the poor against the rich, in great perfection. Any demagogue who wanted his rich neighbor's property, had only to fabricate charges against him, and the common mass, who divided the plunder with the demagogue leaders, speedily condemned and destroyed him. But the demagogues themselves, when they grew rich, intrigued with monarchs, took their bribes, and betrayed their country, for the purpose of securing the stability of existing affairs, and of securing the enjoyment of their revenues, under the strong protection of a master. It was the same with Rome, and would have been the same in England. The renowned Pyms, Hampdens and Sidneys, while so full of patriotism and republicanism, were the pensioners of Louis XIV. While Napoleon was a great republican, he did nothing for France; when he was master, everything. But as he dealt in blood, in either capacity he was a scourge and a curse—perhaps the instrument of the Almighty to punish the people for cutting off the head of the good king Louis XVI. And now they have driven off Charles X., and put up Louis Philippe—perhaps they will drive him off some day, and try once more the experiment of a republic, again to result in the ascendency of a military master. They would have tried a republic the last time the mob was omnipotent, if it had not been for the influence of La Fayette, the associate of our Washington—who knew they could not exist without a master—and they cannot hereafter. If ever the mob shall succeed in getting up a revolution in Great Britain, it will be for the purpose of plunder, and they will settle down again with a more absolute master than ever. *We must have* a master, too, some of these times, to keep *us from cutting* each other's throats, and plundering one

another. I think a permanent sovereign head or master was the design of the great Creator for the regulation of all communities. In every bee-hive there is a king-bee—and every flock of sheep has its bell-wether. I will relate a circumstance which contributed to convince me that a chief directing head would be necessary for our convenience and protection. I went with the promiscuous multitude once to witness an illumination of the old State House in Philadelphia. The street was crammed and jammed, and all who got within seeing distance, remained immovably there, while three-fourths of the people could see nothing of it at all—to say nothing of the bruises, black eyes, torn dresses, and the other indispensable accompaniments of an inconsiderate mob. The people were like a flock of buffaloes in the wild prairie; they gored and trampled upon each other to no purpose. Now if there had been a master, we should have been compelled to act differently, and the affair would have terminated much more to our satisfaction. In Europe, on such occasions, the master will have the masses to go up on one side and down on the other: by such means a million can see a sight as well as a thousand, and there can never occur any violent collisions in the operation. And, say what you may about royalty, it is an ineradicable trait of human nature to desire gorgeous ceremonies and magnificent pageantries. We will grow weary of our plain habits before the end comes. Music and diamonds, crowns and sceptres, titles and distinctions, will have their attractions for the multitude here, as well as elsewhere. Even this boat bears the name of a young princess, who will probably be a reigning monarch in a few years. We have boats named Napoleon, Louis Philippe, Lady Washington, Lady Jackson, &c. We are

progressing. 'Progressive democracy' never pauses until it completes the circle, and returns to monarchy."

The chairman, and of course every person present, not excepting myself, pronounced against Elijah, this time.

"*Your* decision, gentlemen," said Sage, "can amount to nothing. I want the decision of your *grandchildren*."

CHAPTER VIII.

THUS the time was passed during the voyage, without any incident of special importance. I must not omit to mention one circumstance, however, which surprised me. When we reached Pittsburgh, I beheld, among the deck passengers, with his deer-skin trunk on his own shoulder, and in the act of stepping on shore, my Jew competitor, Moses!

"Is it possible you are here, Moses?" said I, coming up with him as he trudged along the wharf.

"To pe sure it's me," said he.

"What, have you removed your store from Hanover?"

"No inteet!" exclaimed he, chuckling; "I'm going on for goots."

"But whom have you left behind to sell those you have on hand?" I inquired, never having seen any partner or clerk in his store, nor having had any intimation of his purpose to go east.

"I left a man—a goot man in my blace. He is von of my bartners, from down te river," said he, in a whisper. *Why he lowered* his tone, I could not conjecture, for all *who were nigh* us at that moment were strangers, and besides, *the drays* vibrated about us like muttering thunder.

"But you did not intend to go east until very recently, did you?"

"Yes inteet—I vanted to go a month sooner, put vanted you to start first."

"And why did you want me to start first?"

"Because ve never vant our combetitors to know anyting apout our movements—ve alvays ket te atvandage py tat bolicy."

"But you gained nothing by it this time?" said I, triumphantly.

"Yes I dit," said he, quickly. "You pait dwenty tollar bassage to dis blace—I pait only vive. I prung Palogna sassengers and grackers in my chest, and bait a voman dwo shilling for all my coffee."

"Do you always take a deck passage, Moses?"

"Oh, no. Sometimes I go in te capin, and dake my chest of jewerly to beddle on—put dis time I saw you dere, and den dook teck bassage. But dere were more teckers dan capin men, tis dime."

"And did you make anything out of the deckers?"

"Te goots I solt on te bassage, (his jumble of Dutch and Welsh increasing as he became more animated,) gost me vorty tollar—dey prought me von huntret and tirty. My pusiness is to pe alvays at pusiness, everyvere. On te steampoats dey ton't make us bay licenze."

I turned away from Moses with rather unpleasant forebodings for the future. How was it possible for me to contend with such a competitor? My only hope lay in the fact that the Jews were proverbially a restless, roving class, and that Moses might, perhaps, soon find a better location than Hanover. If he should not go from Hanover, I determined that I would remove to some point in the in-

terior, where Elijah had informed me the Jews rarely intruded. The Shylocks prefer to be on the navigable streams, where it is always convenient for them to take passage for "parts unknown," should their necessities or inclinations render it expedient for them to do so.

In due course of travel, we reached Philadelphia, and put up at the City Hotel, Third street above Market. Most of the Missourians stopped there at that time. Moses was not of our company. I had not seen him since parting with him on the wharf at Pittsburgh. It was probable he was peddling on foot on the highway to the east.

Now I was in a new sphere, and everything I beheld was novel to my delighted eyes. It was true I was born in a neighboring city; but, as I had left it when only six years of age, I had lost all remembrance of it. There may have been indistinct memories of long streets, church spires, and ship masts; but they seemed like the dim visions of early dreams. Now, all I beheld was reality, and I seemed to gaze upon another world—a bright and happy one. And even at this day, though I have grown familiar with all its streets, places, and with hundreds of its people; and although I have walked the streets of most of the cities of our Union, and of the great cities of Europe, still, whenever chance or business takes me back to Philadelphia, I always enjoy a renewed realization of my first transports, and set it down, without hesitation or reservation, as the most beautiful, the most cleanly, and the most pleasant city in the universe. I entered in the night, the last city I had seen being sombre Pittsburgh. The next morning the sun had risen in splendor in a clear sky. There was an exhilaration in the air, there was a cheerful expression in the faces of the men, and something like the freshness of angelic beauty in the delicate features of the women. Such were my impressions

then—and these impressions have not been wholly dispelled by the lapse of time.

I must not omit to state here a very interesting fact. Although I could not remember anything I had seen at the age of six years, I could distinctly remember what I had tasted. The first plate of oysters I devoured, notwithstanding I had not even seen any since I was a child, had as familiar a taste to me as though I had eaten them the day before.

It was Saturday night when we arrived; and when the church bells were rung the next morning, it seemed to me that I recognized the sound. I went to St. Peter's. This was the first time I ever heard the service of the Episcopal Church. Whether it was the knowledge that Blanche preferred that church that inclined me to go thither, or mere chance that directed my steps, is now a matter of no consequence whatever: but that the imposing solemnity of the ceremonies, the beauty of the Litany, and the spiritual expositions of the minister, made impressions on my heart and mind which have never since been removed, and which I hope will never be eradicated, is a truth of more importance to me. When the sermon was over, I mingled with the retiring congregation as I returned up Third Street. Then the debates we had on the steamer, as we descended the broad Mississippi, occurred to me, and I felt a considerable degree of mortification, when I contrasted my threadbare apparel with the very neat clothes of all the young men around me. The next morning before breakfast, acting upon the hints I had received, I set out in quest of a new suit, ready made, not wishing to endure the delay of being measured by a tailor. At that time, establishments where ready made clothes could be purchased, were few *and far between,* and I was reluctantly compelled at last

to deal with a Jew. At the present time we find clothing houses as plenty as blackberries, with Christian proprietors. And why not keep ready made coats, &c., as well as boots, hats, bonnets, &c.?

After breakfast, I set out in company with Elijah Sage, for whose sagacity I had conceived a profound respect, although I condemned his notions about royalty. We first entered the hardware house of Y. S. & K., where, following Elijah's example, I deposited my money, to guard against the "light-fingered gentry," as they are mildly termed.

I did not ask—my timidity and bashfulness sealing my tongue—if there was a letter for me from Norfolk. One was handed me from Joseph, post marked Pike Bluff, where an office had been established; but I held it unopened in my hand, while Mr. S. looked over the large number that had arrived for the western merchants. On perceiving the direction of my eyes, he announced that no other letter had come for me. No doubt I was pale. I was so agitated by this disappointment, that my hand trembled violently, and after making one or two awkward and ineffectual efforts to open Joseph's letter, I withdrew rather precipitately and returned alone to my room at the hotel.

Joseph's letter contained a proposition, similar to the one he had made his partners, when he had visited the city the year before. His terms were reasonable, and I embraced them. I then became sole proprietor of the store in Hanover. Isaac was to remain with me, while Joseph was to write to Kentucky for *another* brother. Poor brothers in our family were not useless appendages. If there had been twenty of us, it would have been all the better in the end.

This letter I replied to without delay, and then set out

in the direction of the dry-goods houses, and left my letter of reply in the counting room of R. & Co., a celebrated establishment, whence it was sent with their own letters to the post-office. I informed them of the nature of its contents, and as they approved of my determination, and readily proposed selling both myself and Joseph whatever goods we wanted, I felt like one fully initiated into all the privileges and immunities of a regularly established western merchant. The *imprimatur* of several of the leading houses was sufficient. It was a common saying that the man to whom they would sell at all, needed no special recommendation to be enabled to get goods, on time, from any of the other firms along the street. But it will be seen, in the sequel, that some of these houses, in their eagerness to follow in the wake of the old leading establishments, were destined, in river parlance, to "run against a snag."

Having, in the course of a fortnight, completed my purchases, collected most of my bills, and distributed my money, I began to make arrangements to set out on my return, not without many pangs at the thought that I had no intelligence from Norfolk. I was walking slowly down Market street, on the north side, where the noon-day sun of March imparted a warmth, almost as inspiriting as our Missouri sun (which has not *quite* an equal anywhere in the world), when Mr. S. called me into his counting-room and placed a sealed epistle in my hand. Its wax was stamped with the impression of a dove, holding an olive or some other kind of leaf in its beak, and underneath was the motto "Hope on." The superscription was in the hand of Blanche. How I felt it would be in vain for me to attempt to describe. How I looked, no doubt Mr. S. could tell—and I believe he *did* tell.

"*That's from* your brother, is it?" he asked; "perhaps

he sends some news from the west?" I hesitated, and he continued, "I did not observe the post-mark—perhaps it's not from him. I beg your pardon." I tried to make some careless observation in reply, but could not—the half-conceived idea dying upon my tongue. I grew more and more embarrassed, and putting the letter hastily in my pocket, retreated in confusion to my room. Even when I was alone, with my door locked against intruders, my perturbation was slow to abate. I seemed to be suspended in air, while the tumult and commotion in my breast almost bereaved me of my senses. At last I asked myself the question what it all meant. Was I deliriously in love? Even with all these symptoms about me, I was not fully aware of the true depth of my passion. I was conscious of the deep *interest* inspired by Blanche, and of my affection for her; but I did not know that it could subject me to such excesses. Yet I remembered what a flurry all her letters had produced in my head and veins; and hence it was some time before I ventured to open her letter. If the mere sight of it had thrown me into such spasms, perhaps its perusal might be more than I could safely bear. So I spent several minutes in conjecturing its contents, and determining in my mind what I should do, provided she said this or that. Finally, I broke it open, and here is every word it contained.

"*Norfolk*, March 11th, 183–.

"LUKE, if you come to see me, remember it is merely the careless passing visit of a friend. There is a Methodist meeting house near the —— hotel, in which they are holding a protracted meeting. If you follow a merry little old woman (you will know her by her shouting in the meeting house) to her boarding-house, you will find me. My uncle is here, and might be harsh if he met you. Should

you meet, you must not resent anything he may say, and above all, have no hostile collision with him. You must register a promise in heaven to do as I bid, before starting hitherward; else you have not my permission to come. Remember BLANCHE."

Upon reading this, the fire of my passion was somewhat quenched. I did not float on a sea of bliss. In short, I could not clearly define its exact import. Merely a "passing visit!" Why, Norfolk was some two hundred miles out of my way! Such a visit, under such circumstances, would be rather an unusual step for merely "careless" friends. But still it was suggested at that time by Blanche. I thought I understood the caution in regard to her uncle, and I must own that I felt no disposition to have a "hostile collision" with him. It was the last word of the epistle that bothered me most. There was no mark of punctuation at the end of "Remember," which was followed immediately by "Blanche." The interpretations and readings of Malvolio occurred to me more than once as I strove to find her meaning. It might be that she designed to impress more forcibly her injunction in regard to her fiery uncle; or it might relate to the promise she required me to record in heaven: in this case it would be a strange expression, unless it was to be considered in the category of "lovers' vows," for promises merely of friendship are generally supposed to take a contrary direction; and then it might mean for me to *remember Blanche.* That was the most congenial interpretation; and to forget her was altogether out of the question. Among a variety of conflicting conjectures the latter meaning seemed to have preponderance, and so I resolved, in obedience to the magnetic attraction which drew me thitherward, to set out for the south the next morning.

During the passage, I formed a thousand romantic and precautionary schemes to see Blanche without encountering her terrible uncle. But they were all dispelled as we rounded Old Point, and were assailed by a violent storm. I became horribly ill, and it must be admitted that once I wished myself back again in Philadelphia, whither I had promised to return before departing for the west. If the reader has ever been made ill by the motion of the waves at sea, I need not apologize to him for forgetting, during a brief interval, the attractions of Blanche. This kind of illness is a most prompt and effectual cure of love. Let any one who desires to be cured, or to cure others, try the experiment; and if it does not prove to be a perfect remedy, then I may be set down as never being in love, and a mere impostor, instead of a *bonâ fide* victim of Cupid's shafts. To those who have never ventured on the realms of old Neptune, any farther explanation might be incomprehensible.

The sun was declining low in the west when we entered the mouth of the James river, and the vast expanse of troubled waters was beautifully gilded with its last golden rays. When we landed, it was not difficult for me to find the hotel indicated in the letter, and thither I had my trunk (which should have been left in Philadelphia), conveyed. My name and place of residence were engraven on the plate of my trunk, and so the barkeeper immediately transcribed it literally on the register, which lay open on the counter, exposed to the gaze of every one whose curiosity might lead him to read it.

After tea I walked out in quest of the church that had been named; and after some search succeeded in finding it. There was no farther impediment to the realization of my desires, excepting the services, which seemed to be particu-

larly "long drawn out," with scarcely a particle of "sweetness" to one of my impatience. But there was an end of this suspense, as there must be of all things, and I followed my unconscious guide to the place of her abode. I waited a few moments, after the door closed behind her, before I rang the bell. When I did ring, I was ushered in by a colored female servant, whom I had never seen before of course, but who, to my inexpressible surprise, exclaimed, "Iz dis Massa Shortfield?" I promptly told her it was, and she as promptly conducted me to the parlor door; and with an expressive smile, which disclosed two faultless rows of ivory, made a motion for me to enter. I did so, and she closed the door behind me and retreated. I stood in a flood of light, emitted by a capacious lamp on the centre-table. But the spirit of light herself, (if it be not profanation so to express myself,) the indubitable Blanche, stood before me. For a moment we both might have seemed to be stricken blind, and in our very awkward attempts to consummate a hearty shake of the hand, we came nigh perpetrating a more delicate encounter. At length, when mutual consciousness returned, we found ourselves standing face to face, and speechless, like a brace of idiots. I held her by one hand, and she held me by the other, while we gazed deeply in each other's eyes. Finally, her cheeks, which had been as white as her snowy dress, assumed the deepest dye that a rush of blood could give it, and at the same instant mine began to burn and tingle. We relaxed our grasps, and sat down. Again, like simpletons, we did little more, for many precious moments, than gaze at each other. When we parted last, I was but a stripling, and Blanche a mere girl, a few months my senior. She was now a graceful, stately woman—her form, of perfect symmetry, fully developed—while her dress, adapted to the fashion of the day,

was so contrived as to exhibit her faultless proportions to the best advantage. I now felt an awe, an exceeding reserve in her presence, that I had never before experienced. She perceived my surprise and embarrassment, and a lurking smile indicated the pleasure she felt on producing such an effect. For my own part, I also had somewhat changed. I had grown much taller, and now could pass muster for a man. I had also paid especial attention to my exterior accoutrements, and was dressed in the latest style. My voice, too, had changed from the squeaking notes of the goslin to the full intonation of the gander. All this did not seem to be offensive to her—nevertheless, the free, unreserved manner of her girlhood was gone. She did not term me simply "Luke"—it was now "*Mr. Shortfield.*" Nor could I shape my tongue to utter simply "Blanche"—it was "*Miss Blanche,*" though not Miss Beaufort.

I will not detail the conversation which passed between us, simply for the reason that I do not remember a word that was uttered. But the ideas that were conveyed, and the sentiments expressed, as well by the tongue as those unuttered by the eyes, can never be obliterated from memory. She was glad to see me—to see that I had improved; and hoped I would be successful in every undertaking, and that we would continue to be friends, and meet again—but never said a word about love. Nor did I, nor could I for worlds have made a declaration in words. But no doubt every look, every motion betrayed my passion—while she disclosed enough to satisfy me that I was anything rather than indifferent to her. When I told her I would travel to the east again in about a year, she made no hesitation in proposing that I should again visit her, and promised that she would direct a line to me in the same manner as the last,

informing me of the place of her abode. All this was a dangerous procedure for merely "passing friends," but neither of us seemed to be aware of the consequences likely to ensue. We were preparing a theme to occupy our thoughts for a "twelvemonth and a day," which would grow more interesting the more it was dwelt upon.

It was eleven o'clock when I prepared to depart. When I rose Blanche rose too, and extended her hand, which, for want of sufficient confidence, I did not press. I suppose we stood nearly an hour. Both of us seemed to have found our speech at parting, with a vengeance. But still we did not talk of love by name; we only breathed under its overwhelming influence. Knowing her devotion to the Church, I had bought her a beautiful prayer-book; and when I presented it, she presented me with a still more beautiful one. She was delighted to hear that I had been pleased with the church services—and I was rejoiced to hear her animated expressions of approval. At last we parted, but not without an agreement that I should take a final leave of her in the morning, before setting out on my return to the north.

That night I dwelt among the cherubim and seraphim in my dreams, with an occasional damper to my visions in the interposing form of an evil genius—the dreaded uncle, whom I had really never seen. The next morning, when I met Blanche according to appointment, there seemed to be an expression of care, if not of sadness, visible on her features. Certainly the red of the preceding evening had succumbed to the prevailing white again. And when we shook hands for the last time, I might have perceived a lurking moisture in her eyes, had there not been too much of a mist in my own.

I had not been long in my room at the hotel, before a

servant opened my door, and said a gentleman in the parlor below wished to see me. I walked down, and beheld a stranger walking backwards and forwards in the room indicated, which I entered. I sat down on a sofa, waiting for him to address me, if he was the one who desired to see me. The servant had not announced my name, being called away before we reached the door, and I began to reflect whether the gentleman before me, who was very composedly surveying my exterior at every turn he made, was the individual who had desired my presence there, and who he was, what he wanted, &c. I now began to gaze at him. He was about fifty years of age, tall, straight, neatly dressed, and every point and motion indicating the high-bred gentleman. At last he paused and rang a bell, the string of which hung down at the mantle-piece, near which I was sitting. The servant I had just seen appeared, bowing and apologizing. I did not hear the words that passed; but when the servant retired, the gentleman approached the place where I sat, and after a renewed scrutiny of a few moments, thus spoke:

"You are Mr. Shortfield, I believe, whose arrival yesterday I find on the register of this hotel?"

"The same, sir, at your service," I replied, returning his inquisitive gaze. He seemed to be somewhat astonished at the promptitude of my reply, and the anticipatory phraseology of it. But it must have pleased him, as he relaxed the severity of his expression, and assumed an air of polished politeness and profound respect.

"Who I am, and the nature of my business with you, sir, will be expressed in a note, which a friend I have in the next room will deliver to you."

Saying this, he bowed, and withdrew. He had not been

gone more than five minutes, before his friend came in, holding the note specified in his hand.

"I have the honor to deliver this note for my friend, *Mr. Beaufort!*" said he, seating himself, in accordance with my invitation, on the sofa.

I was stricken with the rigidity of a polar blast. I could hardly close my fingers on the epistle he placed in my hand. He marked my consternation; but not desiring, by the sudden prostration of my nerves, to have any good sport spoiled, he strove to encourage me when I had run my eye over the contents of the note, which ran thus:

"SIR—In violation of the expressed desire of my brother, you have persisted in addressing letters to my niece; you have not only done that, but you have had the presumption to seek and obtain a clandestine interview with her. Being her next of kin, and natural protector, I deem it incumbent on me to demand, in this formal manner, the *satisfaction* which one gentleman has a right to require of another (and which no gentleman can refuse), for such an intrusive disregard of the wishes expressed by my brother, and endorsed by myself.

"My friend, Col. S., will arrange the preliminaries with the friend you may be pleased to select to officiate in your behalf.

"I am, sir, with all due consideration, your obedient servant, E. BEAUFORT."

"It is a mere bagatelle, of frequent occurrence," said Col. S.; "very seldom is any harm done. Have you any acquaintances in the city?"

"No," said I.

"No matter," he continued; "any gentleman will act *in your behalf*, and with perfect honor. I have only to

hint at the circumstance among some high-toned gentlemen, and either of them will tender his services."

"This is a matter," said I, my thoughts being now somewhat better collected, "requiring grave consideration. I must reflect upon it. I will give you my answer an hour hence."

"Very well, sir," said he, rising; "I will be punctual." He withdrew, and I retired to my room.

When alone, I was, very naturally, filled with indescribable emotions, and of course they are not to be described. But it was necessary for me to make up my mind what should be done in the premises. What I would *not* do, was already resolved. I did not intend to fight—that was certain. I now thought seriously of the region above, to which I mentally appealed, as the depository of my sacred promise. I felt that I could *die* for Blanche; but she had considerately debarred me from *fighting* for her—and I am bold to say, that it did not enter into my meditations to commit a "breach of promise" on that occasion. I wanted an adviser—but I desired one specially to indicate the means of avoiding the gentlemanly entertainment to which I had been invited. I knew no one in Norfolk, at all—much less one in whose hands I could feel inclined to place my life. So I determined to have it exclusively in my own keeping. But still I felt an inclination to get out of the scrape in a genteel manner, if that were possible. While I was painfully engaged in trying to devise some means by which this object might be accomplished, I was ever and anon interrupted by the entrance of the grinning Pompey, who placed card after card on my table, and stated that the gentlemen were the first characters in the place, and *that they* were all below, perusing the newspapers, and *awaiting my* pleasure.

This state of disagreeable suspense and conjecture, mingled with the production of a constant succession of new cards, continued for some minutes, when it occurred to me that there really was one gentleman residing in the city, with whose name and fame I, in common with the whole country, east and west, was acquainted. Although I had never seen him, I resolved to apply to him for advice, and so I dispatched to him the following note:

"DEAR SIR—I am at No. 6, —— hotel, an entire stranger, and have received a challenge from Mr. E. Beaufort to meet him in mortal combat. I have never seen Mr. Beaufort before to-day, and certainly never insulted or injured him. If you will consent to give me the benefit of your advice in the premises, I will avail myself of the opportunity to relate all the circumstances of the case to you.

"Respectfully, your obedient servant,

"LUKE SHORTFIELD."

Mr. T. received my note politely, and accompanied the bearer back to my room. By this time fifty minutes of the prescribed hour had fled. When Mr. T. was seated, I mentioned the fact to him, and he paused a moment to reflect what should be done, during which time I took occasion to look at him. He was of Herculean frame, with a large head; all the features of his face remarkably prominent, and all bearing the marks of extraordinary intelligence. He was a giant in intellect, and thought only as a giant.

"Write the words down that I shall dictate," said he; "write them with a pencil on the back of this card." Saying this, he handed me one from his pocket. "Now write—'*I am consulting with the gentleman whose name is on this card—when I am done, you shall hear from me again.* L. S.'

Now, sir," continued he, with dignified emphasis, "give me frankly and fully the details of this affair."

I did so in few words—but he seemed to comprehend the whole case before I was half through with my narration.

"I see it all," said he, his features relaxing into a smile; "I see the whole length and breadth of it. And, young man, I must inform you that my sympathies are on the side of Beaufort. His is a family with a history to it. It may be traced back some generations, without finding any of its members descending below a certain level. I do not know anything about you, and I suppose Beaufort is as ignorant of your stock as I am; but it is not a name that one can be familiar with at the mere mention of it. I have daughters myself—and nothing could offend me more grossly, or injure me more deeply, than for some Mr. Nobody to attempt to form an alliance with my family. But as you have paid me the compliment to select me as an adviser in the present matter, I will give you my counsel. If you do not wish to meet Mr. Beaufort, I will get you off with honor. But if you were to fight him, it is my impression, judging from your genteel appearance, that he would like you well enough to consent to the match at some future time."

"But he might kill me, or ——." Here he interrupted me by a fit of uncontrollable laughter, and then exclaimed:

"Pardon me—pardon my rude interruption; it was caused by a mere fancy of my own, and should not have been suggested by your ingenuous expression. You were proceeding in a deliberate course of ratiocination, very natural to a brave man in your circumstances, and my interference was *rude* and unmannerly. Pardon it, and proceed."

"*Or,*" *I continued*, "I might kill him."

"*That places you rectus in curiâ*," said he.

"In either event," I proceeded, "an irreparable act will have been committed. If I fall, I shall have no need for his consent; if he falls, he cannot give it; and in either case, the match, should such a thing be in contemplation, would certainly not be consummated."

"That is well argued," replied the distinguished individual—"and this whole business of duelling, except in cases of peculiar aggravation, is but a vestige of barbarian nonsense. But am I to infer that there is no 'match' in 'contemplation?' "

"I should have informed you of it, decidedly. Nothing of the kind has been proposed by me, or entertained by Blanche. We were schoolmates, and contracted a friendship which has not subsided with subsequent years. We have kept up a friendly correspondence at long intervals; and this is the only visit I have made her since we first parted. We have not uttered a word about love or marriage."

"Pooh! nonsense!" said he, interrupting me again; "you may not possibly be aware of it, to its full extent; but you may take my word for it, that you are deeply, inextricably in love with each other, and will continue to be, perhaps, until death parts you. But, as you say you have no disposition to be killed in a duel—"

"Or to kill her uncle," said I.

"True—you said that, too, and in time," he continued, smiling—"and as you do not propose to carry off your lady-love at this time, and will probably be absent a whole year—during which time one of you, that is, one of the three, may be removed by disease, in which event the difficulty would be obviated—I think the best course to be pursued is to postpone the whole matter for a twelvemonth."

"But," *said I*, "can you devise a feasible plan to accom-

plish such a result? Mr. B. demands satisfaction peremptorily and immediately."

"To be sure I can devise a plan," said he, taking up a pen to compose a reply for me to the message.

While he was writing, Pompey came in with a note for me. It was from Blanche. She wrote as follows:

"LUKE:—The servant who hands you this, belongs to me, and has informed me that my uncle has challenged you to mortal combat. He says he heard my uncle tell his friends that he liked your appearance so much, he was almost sorry that he had quarreled with you, and that if you behaved well on the field, he would tender you his friendship, after an exchange of shots, which he hoped might have no serious result. Now, Luke, are you willing to fight for me? You have never said you desired to have me, nor I that I was at your service. I desire it to be distinctly understood by you, as it is sufficiently by him, that I am not at the disposal of my uncle. I am of age, and am my own mistress. My uncle is kind to me in my presence, and never seeks to control my actions. Should I make an unworthy alliance, the worst thing he could do, or would have a desire to attempt, would be to abandon my society. You now understand the relation in which we stand. I do not, however, wish to break with my uncle. He is generous, brave, and magnanimous; and of course it would wound me past recovery if you, my friend, should slay him in a duel. Thus you see that, by acceding to his proposition, to obtain his friendship, you would lose mine. Of that you may be assured. If you resolve to meet him, I resolve never to see you again. You *must choose* between him and me. But if you determine *to accede to my* request, and depart without a collision with

him, you have my promise that, at a future day, should it be your pleasure, you can see me again, unchanged in every particular. BLANCHE."

I handed this epistle to Mr. T., who read it while I indited a brief reply. I stated in my note, that it had never been my intention to fight her uncle—and that it was now my irrevocable determination not to do so. But that if any *rival* aspired to her hand, and sought to deprive me of her friendship and esteem, then life would not only be of no value to me, but an intolerable burden, which I would be desirous of getting rid of at his hands. I ventured to say that.

"May I also read your reply?" asked Mr. T., laying down the note he had been reading. I handed it to him, and observed a slight frown on his brow as he perused the concluding lines. He said nothing, however; but taking up his pen, finished the reply to the challenge he had been composing for me.

"Copy this, and send it to him," said he. "It will be sufficient. I am going across the bay this morning. Good morning, sir." And so he took leave of me and withdrew.

The following was the reply to the challenge which he prepared for me.

"SIR:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of this morning. In reply, I have to state that, inasmuch as no definite proposal has been made by me to your niece, and as my engagements will demand my unintermitting presence at a point some two thousand miles distant from this, for at least a year to come, I must decline the meeting you demand, at least for the present. Should fortune bring me again in the vicinity of your niece, *at some future day*, and it should then be your pleasure to

renew the demand, that will be the proper time for me to announce my final decision. Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant, L. S."

That short reply did the business. Its contents, when made known to those who had been informed of the pending affair, seemed to be satisfactory. The gentlemen who had so kindly tendered their services to officiate in my behalf, as well as the other party, soon dispersed, and my departure from the place, as may well be expected, was not long delayed.

As the steamer ran down the river, I could not avoid felicitating myself on my lucky escape. When we touched at Old Point, I found a rumor was in circulation that the meeting had taken place, and I was asked by one of the gentlemen on the wharf if Mr. Shortfield had expired on the field, or died afterwards at the hotel. That I was dead, seemed to be a matter of certainty. I merely replied that I had not been informed of the occurrence at all. The questioner only stared at me incredulously.

When I reached Baltimore, I found my death announced in the papers, and moreover ascertained that I had disabled my antagonist, by shattering his pistol-arm.

When I arrived in Philadelphia, the papers had it that we were both mortally wounded; and when I entered the stores of my acquaintances in Market Street, they stared at me as if I was a ghost. But the one who seemed to be the most astonished—in fact, rather disappointed—was my old friend Moses, whom I met at one of the principal dry-goods houses. I lost no time in assuring the newspaper men that I was alive and well—but they hesitated to contradict *must false report*, because, as they alleged, I was a stranger *accem, and* might be imposing on them with an interested *rtial* version of the affair. I deemed it a most out-

rageous thing to find my name in all the papers—coupled with every variety of stigma for suffering myself to be killed—when I was alive. I was contented, however, to enjoy the reality of life, and had no desire to interfere with the business of the reporters.

CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE said that I met with Moses, the Jew. One of the Market Street men, seeing his goods were marked for Hanover, my place of business, asked me some questions about him. When I had given him all the information I possessed, he remarked that he had not inquired with any view to make Moses a customer. He made it a rule never to trust western Jews. Moses had paid him for the goods he bought, which, packed in two boxes, were standing on the pavement before the door. He said that he had supposed Moses was a Jew, although his language and dress were in exact imitation of the thorough-bred western merchant; and upon putting the question to him directly, had forced him to make an affirmative reply; and he then declined selling him anything on credit. But Moses had insisted on buying his goods, and had paid the money for them.

All this surprised me. Why had Moses attempted to conceal the fact of his being a true Israelite? Why had he bought goods of a house which refused to sell him on time? I could not then divine his motive, but suspected there was some design in it—and so did the merchant *alluded to.* But neither of us had anything to do with the

designs of others; so we agreed to let the matter drop, and attend to our own business.

The next day I started westward, in company with a number of western men. After being overturned once or twice in the mountains, without sustaining further injury than a few contusions, we reached Pittsburgh on the third or fourth day. When we stopped at the door of the hotel, who should jump down from the driver's box, whip in hand, but the ubiquitous Moses! In the character of an itinerant peddler, he had learned the use of the whip, and had made, an arrangement to drive the coach through to Pittsburgh, so that he would have no passage money to pay.

In the afternoon we were descending the beautiful Ohio, on the new steamer Flora McIvor—the name of the heroine who pitied and protected Prince Charles Edward, the fugitive Stuart, and Pretender to the British throne. The sun beamed brightly on the clear gliding stream, (after we had emerged from the cloud of dark smoke hanging like a pall over the city,) and we enjoyed the refreshing breeze as we sat on the boiler deck. Again I was doomed to meet my evil genius, Moses, who was now transformed into a book peddler (he would not hesitate to peddle this work, and to inform the purchaser that he was the identical Moses described in it), and seemed to be making expenses.

The most of the time was spent, on our return, in the examination of invoices. We compared them with each other, (being mostly from different locations,) and although the qualities of many of the articles could not be ascertained, yet from our knowledge of the market we were enabled to form a very correct idea of the extra per cent. put on by some of the jobbers. And I noticed that when any one of our party ascertained he had been charged less for an article than his neighbors, he boasted of it, as an indication of his

superior judgment, rather than an evidence of the extortion of the seller. It frequently occurred that the old regular houses had charged a shade higher for leading staple goods, the value of which we all knew, than their more modern competitors. But in most instances, when there was a *material* difference in price discovered, the comparison was rather against the latter. Yet we thought the greatest disparity existed in the New York bills, and always to the disadvantage of the inexperienced purchaser. And it was ascertained that where a bill had been made with an irregular Jew house, the poor silly victim had been skinned alive. This habit of examination and comparison on the part of the western merchants, is still kept up, and is a capital mode of ascertaining the relative merits of eastern houses.

We were all some two weeks ahead of our goods. Getting them to Pittsburgh was a tedious process, as they had to be conveyed most of the way in wagons. The charges to Pittsburgh were from two and a half to five dollars per hundred pounds. Now, they can be taken from Philadelphia, during most seasons, to the utmost bounds of civilization in the far west, for about two dollars the hundred pounds. It was not important that I should get home before my goods arrived. My brother was at Hanover, and was entirely qualified to manage the establishment, with its reduced stock of goods, during my absence. So I determined to spend a short time in Kentucky, at my former home. When I landed at a village on the river, for the purpose of going into the interior, I was surprised to find that so many of the passengers of the Flora McIvor had parents and sisters and brothers in Kentucky. Their situations were similar to my own, and they availed themselves of the interval required to bring up their goods, to visit the homes of

their childhood. This circumstance explains why there were so many more marriageable males than females in Missouri, and indeed in all the new states. The young men set out to seek their fortunes, leaving their sisters behind. When the new countries become civilized, then the girls go out. But the scarcity of the commodity at the early stages of settlement, certainly affords any enterprising girl a capital opportunity of making an advantageous speculation in the matrimonial line. They are in better demand in the new states than elsewhere; and I have frequently known them to marry immediately after going thither, even several years after they had arrived at the age of despair at home. I state a notorious fact, which merits the attention of the redundant female population in the east.

I proceeded without delay to the home of my childhood, and entered my mother's humble house unannounced and unexpected, for I had not informed her of my purpose of going thither. But nevertheless I was not the less welcome. I had the parent's kiss, and saw the tear of joyful affection glitter on her aged cheek. My father had several years before been consigned to the tomb. He had collected around his couch those of his family who were in the vicinity, whom he blessed, and leaving his blessing for those who were absent, he departed in peace—a happy, confiding Christian. But before his eyes were closed, he had spoken most impressively of the just ways of Providence, while a smile of triumph beamed upon his face. My mother remembered his words, and repeated them to me, as follows: "My dear children, you all know that I was once rich in this world's goods, and now am poor. You all know that I have endeavored to discharge the duties of a faithful and consistent Christian; and yet misfortune fell

upon me, and scattered to distant quarters most of those I loved and cherished. More than half of them are now absent, while I am upon my dying bed. What see you in all this? Do you think I have been hardly dealt with by my Heavenly Father, whom I have tried faithfully to serve? Do not think so. I die happy. I behold his goodness with a grateful heart. Had I died possessed of the fortune I once held, I doubt not every member of my family would have been still under my roof, wholly dependent upon my little wealth for their future subsistence, and disqualified to take care of themselves after my removal. Were it so, the consciousness of that fact would trouble my last moments with pangs of anxiety, and misgivings for their future welfare. But now, since you have been taught to rely upon yourselves, under the guidance of the Eternal Disposer of events, for the means of future enjoyment, I have no cares on that head. I have letters from those who are absent, stating the amount of wealth they have each realized, and I have made an estimate of the means of those present. These amounts, added together, make a much larger sum than I ever possessed. Thus you see the kindness of God, and his superior wisdom in providing for those who put their trust in him. What we were disposed to regard as a very great evil, proves to be a very great blessing. The loss of my wealth has resulted in a most fortunate event, instead of being a permanent misfortune, as you were too apt to regard it. Let this circumstance, or rather the lesson it inculcates, have an abiding-place in your minds. Be faithful, confiding Christians, and leave the rest to Him who knows all your wants and necessities better than you know them yourselves. And when misfortunes shall come—and come they will—still, oh, still *trust in God,* and murmur not! If you be true and faith

ful, no earthly event can deprive you of an adequate share of happiness in this life. And remember that the darkest hours, in our worldly affairs, are often but the precursors of brighter days. So I counsel you never to despair when disasters seem to encompass you. We do not abide here long, and we can take nothing with us. When we go hence, we can have no use for any of the objects or enjoyments of this world. We go to mansions provided for our eternal abode, prepared by the great Creator for those who obey him." And so he passed away, without a struggle, without a sigh, like an infant falling asleep.

For several days I wandered about the village and its vicinity, visiting the haunts of my early days. But this visit was one of sadness rather than of pleasure. The scenes of my boyhood, it is true, had not changed; the same trees, and brooks, and houses, were there—but the associations were gone—my old playmates were scattered to the winds, and new faces met me at every turn. I, too, had changed. I was now a man, and found that the things which had beguiled my youthful fancy (all except one) could no longer interest my more mature mind. The lawns, and groves, and fields—the village streets and houses—seemed strangely diminutive and contracted when contrasted with the expanded and illimitable views in the far west, or the immense avenues and structures of the far east. I had been roving in the great world, and could no longer confine my attention to the old schoolboy limits. Thus I sighed to find one of my cherished anticipations forever dispelled. I had habitually indulged the fond daydream of being enabled, at some future time, to return to this once lovely spot, in ample competence, and there to spend in peace the remnant of my days. But the vision was now gone. I felt that this place could never again

be my home—and that to dwell with fond remembrance, when far away, upon the happy days I had passed there, would be the only enjoyment I should be able in the future to derive from it.

Near the old school-house was the graveyard. I entered it, and stood by the head-stone of my father. The grave was sodded over, with here and there a modest flower lifting its petals. And I thought of the inevitable time when I, too, must repose in the bosom of the earth. The time seemed near at hand when compared with eternity. There was no exemption for any one. I ran over in my mind the long list of nations whose history I had read, and the catalogue of illustrious names, distinguished for their wisdom and their acts, whether for good or evil; and not one of them, however great or powerful he had been on earth, had been able to avoid the narrow tomb. All had perished. All must perish. But all must rise again, to die no more, to dwell in bliss or misery. I trembled while I gazed and meditated. I dwelt upon the dying words of my father, whose crumbling remains reposed beneath my feet, and made a solemn vow to remember his counsels, and uttered a secret prayer that my end might be as peaceful and calm as his. I turned away, impressed with the conviction that those who are doomed to wander through the world, would derive a benefit by an occasional pilgrimage to the graves of their parents and kindred. It would serve to demonstrate what is so often lightly heard from the pulpit—the solemn fact that all our schemes of ambition, all our labors for the attainment of earthly enjoyments, must have a termination—and that we should be more vitally interested in the affairs of the life beyond the grave, where our condition is destined to be *unchangeable.*

My sadness was measurably dispelled in the enjoyment of the society of my mother, and brothers and sisters who still lived in the vicinity. All of the family that were married were doing well. My sisters' children were quite numerous, while their parents by successful enterprise and industry, were amply providing for their education and support. None of the family were reprobates; if there was to be a "black sheep" among us, he was not yet developed. All were either religious, or strictly moral. My brother Jacob, who had failed in business at Claysville, and had been "sold out" by the sheriff about the time he brought home his bride, had gone off with his wife, still cheerful in misfortune, to one of the western cities, where he met with business, and soon amassed sufficient capital to buy a good stock of goods without going in debt. He had done this, and returned to the village before time and distance had destroyed his ideas of its beauty. He was now in the "full tide of successful experiment," rendered careful by his reverses, and secure against a repetition of them. It was not long before he too purchased his goods in Philadelphia, where his credit, when he desired to use it, was well established.

At the end of a fortnight, I took my leave of my mother and the family, and was soon again descending the bright waters of the Ohio, on my way to St. Louis. I arrived at that busy mart without accident, or incident worthy of relation, just in time to see my goods brought thither by another steamer. Again I saw Moses on the quay. He was full of business, with a bill of lading in his hand. I witnessed the disembarkation of his goods, which made an enormous pile on the wharf. He had some fifty boxes *of dry-goods!* I was truly alarmed to think that he should *take such* a quantity of goods to Hanover, where I supposed

some $15,000 worth would be the utmost amount that could be disposed of at a profit. I also wondered how he became possessed of money enough to pay for such a vast quantity of merchandize.

"You seem to stare at my goots," said he; "but never mint, I von't pe in your vay. I have written to my bartner in Jefferson city to hire me a pig house. I am going to stob dere vith my goots. Hanover von't do for me yet a vile, unless you go off. You von't let me undersell you, and if I go dere I can't get all de gash. At Jefferson, de old merchants, ven I undersell dem, still ask der old brices, and vait for me to sell out. Dey sell on credit—I for gash. Ven I get all te money, I go some blace else, and let dem collect der debts if dey can. When money gets blenty I vill go back again."

This was the last of my personal acquaintance with Moses. But I heard of him again; for he made quite a noise in Missouri. He did get all the money in his neighborhood, and truly he did undersell everybody. He sold for cash, and for less than the cost of the goods in his invoices, and yet he made more money than any other merchant in that whole section of country. It turned out that the goods he had paid for at one or two of the leading houses in the east, enabled him to buy on credit from the others; and, to use a very expressive western phrase, he had "gone the whole figure," and "picked them up" to the tune of some thirty thousand dollars. Before the expiration of six months Moses was "in bankruptcy," and pretended to be the most unfortunate and the most miserable man alive. He said he had been defrauded by his clerks, and cheated by the people, who paid him in bad money. He had, besides, been robbed of several thousand dollars, *to say nothing of* the immense amount of goods that had

been stolen from his store one dark night. He showed how his door had been broken open, and exhibited to the people his rifled and empty strong box. His creditors seized what was left. His assets amounted to five thousand dollars—his debts to thirty thousand. But the injury he had wrought did not end here. He had completely destroyed the business of the other merchants, who designed to pay for their goods, but were rendered unable to do so punctually.

My business at Hanover, like Joseph's at Pike Bluff, went on flourishingly. Our profits this season were equal to our hopes. The country around us was rapidly filling up with *German* emigrants—industrious farmers, artisans and manufacturers. Although their outward appearance indicated extreme poverty, it was soon ascertained that their old oaken chests contained an astonishing amount of gold; and the coins of Europe soon began to circulate more abundantly in Missouri than, perhaps, in any other part of the Union. The trade with New Mexico likewise brought us a large amount of dollars and doubloons; and so there was no occasion for the use of shinplasters. This was the result of circumstances, none of which had the politicians any hand in bringing about—although they enjoyed the credit of giving us such a good circulating medium. Subsequent experience has proved that the depreciated shinplasters of other states could not be kept out of circulation by all the wisdom of our rulers; and since the banishment of the U. S. Bank notes, every Missouri merchant has at times been under the necessity of submitting to the extortionate discounts of brokers, when converting the currency taken in his neighborhood into paper that would be received in the east.

When the spring business was over, I took an account

of stock, and found myself worth seven thousand dollars. I had hardly completed this business, and was congratulating myself on my success, when a gentleman arrived from Tennessee, and announced his purpose to embark in business at Hanover. During a conversation with him, I remarked that, as there was not more business transacted in Hanover than one establishment could do, I would sell out to him, provided he paid me cost and carriage for the goods on hand, and would also purchase my house (which had been enlarged and improved), and all the debts due me. To my surprise he consented to do so, and proposed paying the cash down. I consulted with Joseph, who advised me to close with him. I did so, and, at the end of June, found myself out of business. But all my debts were paid, and I had a handsome sum left.

I did not for some time know exactly what course to pursue next. I had remitted to the east sufficient money to pay every debt there, and had resolved to go thither myself with the remainder. This much was determined upon. But still I hesitated, for some time, to fix upon another location, and was in doubt whether Blanche would go with me to Missouri, for I had positively concluded that I would demand the hand of Blanche. That idea had become fully developed at last. But I had some misgivings about her uncle, who would probably still insist on my fighting him, before consenting to the match. That I would not fight a duel, was another matter determined in my mind. I could see no necessity for it—not to think of the personal risk attending such amusements. Blanche was of age, and did not require the permission of any one to get married; and so I resolved, she being willing, to marry her without her uncle's consent, if that could only be obtained through an exchange of bullets.

Finally, Joseph persuaded me to select a location

my next stock of goods, some hundred miles in the interior, where the country was filling up rapidly with emigrants, and whither he intended removing himself at no distant day. The places in which we had been operating were now becoming *too old* for us. Competitors were springing up thickly, and we had not sufficient "elbow-room." We wanted a whole region to ourselves, so that we might control the trade for a vast extent around us.

I made out a memorandum for an entire stock of new goods, and agreed to be the pioneer for Joseph in the south-western portion of the state, provided Blanche threw no obstacles in the way. Nevertheless, other considerations sometimes induced me to think that it might not be at all necessary for me to bury myself, and particularly Blanche, in the wilds of the west, where there was but little society like that to which she had been accustomed. Although fate seemed to destine me to hopeless obscurity, yet I could not help regarding a residence in the east, in one of the cities of the old states, as the only means of obtaining a realization of the comforts and pleasures of life, the charming descriptions of which I had so often read in romances. I had often heard that it would be a good exchange to barter a whole lifetime in the west for a few delicious years in the east. Such is the effect of the exaggerations of fashionable novel writers, and the extravagant tales of foolish travelers, who do not view a city long enough for its novelty to wear off. I had accumulated a considerable sum of money, by my own honest industry; and then, if Blanche should consent to link her fortune with mine, my capital would be considerably increased. I did not know the extent of her fortune—but I knew that the income which it yielded was sufficiently large to maintain her. Her uncles were rich by inheritance, and she was the

representative of their deceased brother. They had the management of her estate, while she was a minor, and as they never embarked in speculation, a thing rather degrading in their estimation, and were certainly honorable in all their transactions, it might be inferred that Blanche had no mean possessions for the one on whom she might confer her hand. Then I was young enough to supply the omissions in my early education, and might study a profession, or simply live at ease on the proceeds of judicious investments in real estate. These subjects filled my thoughts often both by day and night. But still there was a charm in the half-roving life of the western merchant, which I could not think of abandoning without regret. Had I not fallen in love with Blanche, or had I chosen a wife in the far west, I felt that I could have spent all my days, as I had been spending them, in perfect contentment. But it was vain to speculate on what I might have done. So far I had done very well, and it seemed that I was destined to do better still, if I would only follow up my good fortune.

It was in the balmy month of June, when they say maids are fondest, and youths most attractive, that I took passage on the steamer Ioway for St. Louis. The Ioway was commanded by Captain Shalcross, one of the kindest, most gentlemanly, and most accomplished masters on the river. Capt. S. gave me bank notes for my gold. With this paper I designed buying a draft from the bank, on the east, as it was said to be drawing. The gold I could not conveniently carry about my person, and did not like to leave it in my trunk. Silver would have been better, being too unwieldy for robbers to carry away. During the passage down, I made an exact estimate of what I was worth, and found the sum to be upwards of seven thousand dollars, besides

some two hundred dollars in Philadelphia, being the interest allowed me on the payments I had made before the bills were due.

When we arrived at St. Louis, I immediately went to the bank to purchase a draft; but so high a premium on eastern exchange was demanded, that I resolved not to pay it. So I demanded the specie for their notes which I held. They paid me the money, all in half dollars, which I placed in my large strong trunk, and had it taken down in a dray to the boat on which I was to go to Pittsburgh.

The steamer in which I took passage was the Earthquake, a famous craft for speed, but now somewhat old. Lying beside her at the landing, was the Ark, a new and superb vessel, which insisted on having the old price for passage, while the former abated the terms to the extent of five dollars. Travelers had not learned wisdom then—experience had to teach it. The Earthquake, when new, had been a "crack boat," both for beauty and speed; and now its fame survived its powers and its charms. Every two or three years improvements were introduced in boat-building, and every new brood of boats surpassed the last, both for speed and accommodations. These facts did not occur to me at the time, and so I followed the crowd that preferred the Earthquake.

Both boats had up steam, and were advertised to start at the same hour; and from the hurried movements of the officers and crew about their bows, it seemed that they really intended to verify the assertions of their masters. The master of the Ark told us all that he intended to beat the Earthquake to Pittsburgh—he thought he would get there two days first. Some of our passengers who were *pressed for time*, left us and went on board the Ark, being *willing to* pay the extra five dollars for the sake of the

time to be saved. Upon learning what had been said and done, our master became very indignant. He said it was a deliberate falsehood asserted by his rival—and that no boat running from St. Louis to Pittsburgh had ever beaten the Earthquake. The Ark *should not* do it; and he intended to mortify the passengers who had left him, by convincing them that they had been imposed on.

When the hour of ten o'clock A. M. arrived, true to his pledge, the captain of the Earthquake shouted out to his man standing by the huge iron ring on shore, to which the cable was fastened, "Let go there!" He was obeyed, and the next moment we were "backing out" from the thick cluster of boats that surrounded us. Instead of going up the river to make a display, as the Princess Victoria had done, the Earthquake turned its nose down stream as soon as it got clear of the other vessels, and "put out" on its voyage under a full head of steam. The Ark, on the contrary, as if it had been playing a game of artifice, instead of following in our wake, suffered its pent up steam to escape, which enveloped its chimneys in a huge white cloud, and caused our captain to remark, "the Ark is wasting its steam, which it will need before it gets to Pittsburgh. I wonder what the —— they got up steam for? If it was to make the people believe he told the truth, and would go at the time appointed, its escape now, which every one must notice, for there is a —— sight of it, will give the lie to his pretensions. I wonder how the passengers who left us, feel about this time?" This was spoken to a few of us who stood beside him on the hurricane deck, near the pilot's house. The pilot shook his head, with a meaning that was not at first comprehended by us.

"You *think* he will come after us, then?" asked the *captain.*

"I don't think anything else," replied the pilot.

"But what makes you think so?" continued the captain, still looking back, as we descended the current rapidly on the Illinois side, and seeing no indication that the Ark intended to pursue us.

"The captain of the Ark said he intended to beat us to Pittsburgh. I *know* him. I have sailed with him. He never lies."

"But he has lied, not ten minutes ago, as you and everybody knows. He said he would push out at ten o'clock, and he hasn't moved yet," said the captain, with an air of triumph.

"He'll *wipe it out* before we get to Pittsburgh," said the pilot, giving the wheel a vigorous whirl, while the vessel, answering to the helm, followed a turn of the current, and sped along where the waters of the muddy Missouri and the transparent Mississippi met, still seeming reluctant to mingle, although they had coursed side by side upwards of twenty miles. On our right, the water was of the color of rich coffee, about one-third cream; on the left it was a sea of crystal.

Onward we sped, and still no boat could be seen pushing out behind us. At length, when we entered the turn below the great bar, and were about to lose sight of the city, a white cloud of steam could be perceived far up the river.

"There he comes!" said the pilot.

"No," replied the captain; "that is the Sultana, going to New Orleans. I know her by the length of her stroke, and the intervals between the escape of her steam."

"The Ark has a long stroke, and a big engine," said the pilot, smiling.

"*That's the* War Eagle," said the barkeeper, who had *come up with* a telescope. "She is from the upper Mississippi, and was expected in this morning."

"You know more about adulterated liquors and marked cards, than the names of steamboats, at this distance," retorted the pilot; that functionary being indignant that any one, even the master himself, should pretend to know more about such matters than he did.

Just then, and before it could be ascertained whether the boat in question was approaching or leaving the landing, the bend in the river hid it from our view, and put an end to the conjectures. The captain seemed in doubt, and ill at ease. He was also vexed to find his principal officer disposed to substantiate the predictions of his rival commander.

"Do you really think the Ark will beat us, Mr. Lucas?" said he, in an under tone, which I could hear, as I happened to be standing quite near the open window of the pilot-house.

"I am sure of it," replied the pilot. "The Ark is of the same tonnage as the Earthquake, and has one more boiler, and a more powerful engine. If they choose to push her with a full head of steam, she *must* beat us; and hence I don't see the use of trying to keep ahead of her."

"But she is new, this being her second trip, and her machinery is not smooth yet," said the captain. "Besides, they never like to push a new boat at first. They must ascertain her full capacity by degrees—try her gradually and safely—for there are sometimes flaws in new machinery and new boilers, that won't stand *rushing* as well as those of an old boat."

"Sometimes that is the case, and sometimes it is not," continued the imperturbable Mr. Lucas, who did not now for an instant remove his eyes from some guiding object in the distance before him. "It is not the case with the *Ark*. The pilot of her told me that they put her up to tip

top speed against the Ben Franklin, as they came down to Louisville, and for three hours they ran side by side, hip and thigh, and she performed well, without a screw getting loose. Still, I admit, her captain is a timid man; and being part owner, he will not like to run any risk. But from what her pilot told me, and from the time she made coming from the mouth of the Ohio up to St. Louis, her ordinary speed, under a moderate head of steam, is about equal to ours when we 'rush the kettles' to the utmost. So if she were merely to keep up her usual fires, we would have to be on a desperate strain all the time to keep pace with her. But if they throw in a little rosin, they must shoot ahead of us in spite of the d—l."

"We can beat her one way," persisted the captain; "we can make fewer stops at the towns, and refuse to take any way-freight. We can be more active at the wood yards, and thus make up for her superiority in speed. I want to beat her, Mr. Lucas. I desire that you will take all near cuts. We are lighter than she is, and can go where she durst not follow."

After hearing this very edifying colloquy, I went down below, and took a seat among the passengers on the boiler deck. They, too, were discussing the chances of victory and defeat. But the majority, presuming upon the fame of the Earthquake, achieved in other days, seemed confident that we should see nothing more of the Ark during the voyage. I said nothing to check their flow of spirits, but felt impressed with the conviction that they were destined to be disappointed.

The bell rang for dinner, and we all went in. For the first time I saw all the passengers collected at the long well-furnished table. There were about sixty, one half of whom were ladies. During the first five minutes

after being seated, a silence was maintained. We were all strangers to each other, excepting a few parties of two or three, being of the same families; and the first five minutes were spent in gazing at one another. By the expiration of the next five minutes, however, the scene had changed, and a constant hum of voices had succeeded to the silence. Each one had made the acquaintance of his neighbor, (such being the interesting custom on the western waters,) and inquiries and replies were heard freely on all sides. This was succeeded by anecdotes and laughter, and so the time passed off very agreeably, as did the sumptuous repast.

After dinner, those of us who had none of the other sex in charge, and those who had not been so particularly interested in the conversation of any lady as to desire to prolong it, resumed our seats on the boiler deck, and regaling ourselves with cigars, chatted upon the miscellaneous topics that occurred at the moment.

My thoughts relating chiefly to my own affairs, I was more of a listener than a talker. But I felt peculiarly invigorated with the fine dinner, and enlivened by the flavor of my cigar. I looked at the receding banks with a feeling of joy and independence, as we glided on our way to the accomplishment of our various objects, and especially to mine. I had my fortune in my trunk, and the key of my state-room in my pocket. My health was good; I was young; I was on my way to claim the hand of her I loved; and bright skies, and brighter hopes, seemed to beam propitiously on my pathway.

"You seem to be in a good humor," remarked an old gentleman who sat next to me, and who had, no doubt, marked the expression of my features, and listened to the *cheerful tune* I had been humming.

"Oh, yes," said I, "I am in a good humor with myself, and with all around me. But *you* don't seem to be as gay as the rest of us," I replied, observing his sharp sneering cast of face.

"And what is more," said he, "I am sure I never would seem to be so, out here in the west, for I could never feel contented among such a population—and I am glad to be going homeward. Perhaps that's the cause of *your* cheerfulness."

"You are an eastern man, then?"

"Certainly I am," said he; "I am certain you could not take me to be any other. To tell you my mind freely, I have not a high opinion of the western folks. I suppose, from your appearance, that you do not live in any of the new states—I mean, by the new states, Missouri and Illinois; not Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, or Tennessee."

"You are mistaken," said I, somewhat warmly; "I am a western man, and live in Missouri; and I beg to differ from you in the estimation you place upon the western people. May I ask where you reside? I have told you the place of my abode."

"I live in New York," said he.

By this time the subject of our conversation had attracted the attention of the company; and I determined to make an effort to vindicate the western character.

"Why, may I ask," I continued, "do you hold the western people in such low estimation?"

"Because of one thing," said he; "they have not schools enough; and, as a consequence, they must be deficient in intelligence and all the comforts of good society."

"But, sir," said I, "that is a deficiency which will be *supplied, as the* country grows older. Besides, the people *who now inhabit* the new states were already educated be-

fore they came hither, and educated, too, in the old states, which seem to monopolize your affections."

"What kind of education had they?" he continued, sneeringly, (he seemed to be a crabbed, ill-natured old man;) "and what kind of people do you find going to such a wilderness? Do you behold any of the polished portion of the population of the eastern states coming out here?"

"Yes," said I, "I see *you* here. The object which brought you here may bring others." This produced a laugh at the expense of the old gentleman, which irritated him considerably.

"No doubt a good many do come out on the same errand that brought me. But, like me, they go back again, disgusted with the profanity, dissipation, rudeness, and ignorance they behold."

This was a pretty rough rejoinder; but instead of being laughed at, it was heard with manifest displeasure by a majority of the listeners.

"Every one does not see with your eyes, neighbor Snapup," interposed a gentleman at his side. "I am from the east, too, and my business has called me to the far west more than once. I must confess that the people appear to me to be as shrewd, upright, and kind, as the mixed population of the cities; and generally they are far more contented. Gentlemen, Mr. Snapup, as you may have heard, is the head of one of our largest importing houses, and sometimes sustains heavy losses in the west. He thinks he is privileged to enjoy his revenge in abusing the country, because some of the people have been too *keen* for him in business transactions."

"Business transactions!" replied Mr. S., contemptu-

ously. "What do they know of business? I mean the merchants, as they call themselves."

"Pardon me for one moment," said I; "I do not desire to deprecate your wrath against the merchants; I merely wish to show these good people, none of whom are merchants—for this is not the season, as you are aware, when they go east—that I am not ashamed to acknowledge my occupation or my abode. I am a western merchant—a Missouri merchant."

"There may be exceptions in every class," continued Mr. Snapup; "and I do not assert that you are not such an exception, not knowing you one way or the other; but I mean to say, that not one in a hundred of the so-called western merchants know anything of the first principles of business. They do not know the value of anything they deal in; but merely regulate the price to be demanded for an article by its cost."

"Admitting that they are not regularly educated in the business," said I, "like the city merchants, still I cannot perceive a better or safer guide by which to be governed than the one you have named. If they give one dollar for an article and sell it for two, I do not see the indispensable necessity of their being acquainted with the intrinsic value of the goods sold."

"You don't, eh? Then I do. They have to cope with *us*, when they come to buy their goods. They are in our power, and we can cheat their eyes out of them. Don't talk to me about the *shrewdness* of western merchants. The eastern men can beat them at any kind of a bargain."

"When we are not familiar with the value of an article," said I, "we rely upon the word and honor of the man we *buy of*. Surely you don't mean to throw out the inference, *that cheating* and making false representations form a part

of the education of the eastern merchant, and are to be taken as specimens of your eastern refinement and manners. If so, the more you condemn us, the better we will be pleased with ourselves." Here he was again irritated by the laughter that ensued.

"No, sir!" cried he, "I do not mean that you shall draw any such inference. My words do not warrant it. I said we *could* take advantage of your ignorance—not that we would do it, or had done it. But it is different with you. If you possessed the same advantage, you would use it. But you do not possess anything of the kind, sir; you never cheat us, with all your shrewdness. I never knew an instance of it."

I strove to check the angry feelings which his very offensive and personal remarks were well calculated to produce. I suspected that his wealth and age had habituated him to the exercise of such license in his unscrupulous denunciations. And it struck me that perhaps he had recently sustained some heavy losses, which might naturally have caused his ill-humor—but which, if I could elicit the fact, would contradict the assertion that the western merchant was never able to make the best bargain. So I asked him if he had any fault to find with his Missouri customers.

"Fault to find? I can find *nothing else*, to use one of their own vulgar expressions," said he, actually red with indignation, "when I ought to find some thirty thousand dollars."

"How so?" I inquired.

"I'll tell you, sir. One of your men of St. Louis failed in business two years ago, owing me twenty thousand dollars. I was the first to be informed of the failure. I hurried out here, and soon found it was a desperate case. He *had been speculating* in lands, and hiring tenants to im-

prove them, instead of making them pay him rent. He had ten thousand acres up the Missouri river, divided into twenty farms of five hundred acres each. On these he had rude houses erected, and fields enclosed, which cost him a deal of money. In short, when I arrived, his assets consisted mostly of these investments. They had cost him first and last, full twenty thousand dollars. But he said lands were increasing in value, and his would bring five dollars per acre at the end of two years. All the people told me the same thing; I didn't weigh *his* word a feather. That would be fifty thousand dollars at the end of two years. I demanded the documents. He exhibited the patents, all right, so that there could be no dispute about the title. He then proposed to settle with me, and asked what proportion of the lands would satisfy me. I told him I wanted them all. I looked at the chart, and saw that they lay along the river. They were situated well, and I wanted to have the *benefit of the rise*. So I compounded with him by paying him ten thousand dollars in cash, besides giving up his notes, and took all the farms.

"The next one I had large dealings with, was a peaked nosed fellow, who, instead of giving his references in the usual manner, boldly pointed to his boxes before the doors of several of our leading merchants, and showed invoices of his purchases in Philadelphia. He was too bold, we thought, and too indifferent about buying, to be irresponsible. So we sold him ten thousand dollars' worth of goods on six months' time, it being understood that he was not to have any longer indulgence. Well, six months have not elapsed, and yet I am too late. The rascal swindled me. He sacrificed the goods to obtain cash for them, which he now *holds in his* pocket, and coolly intimates that he hopes I *may get it!* Have I no fault to find?"

"Was his name Moses?" asked I.

"You know him, then!" he continued. "Yes, it was Mr. Moses Tubal, sir, at your service. I find he is an acquaintance of yours."

"He is a wandering Jew, sir, and has been my rival and antagonist in business. But, sir, he never got the advantage of me, as he did, confessedly, of you. Did you not say the western men never were known to be shrewd enough to get the advantage of you?"

"Yes! yes! he did!" exclaimed a half dozen voices, mingled with laughter. This was more than Mr. Snapup could endure. He clenched his fists, foamed at the mouth, and springing up from his chair, walked backwards and forwards rapidly, for several minutes.

"But you have not told us the sequel of the other transaction; perhaps you had no fault to find with it?" said I, when he became a little composed. This threw him into greater excitement than ever.

"Fault to find! I tell you I found nothing else! When I left the Jew, I went straight to look after my farms. Sir, this spring's flood has washed away every acre of them!"

"Then you had the *benefit of the rise*," said I. But he did not hear me. He rushed into the state room and locked himself up.

CHAPTER X.

We ran all day without seeing anything more of the steamer which the pilot supposed was chasing us. We overtook and passed one or two boats bound downward, which had started several hours before us; and so most of the passengers ceased to think any more of the Ark.

The Earthquake performed well, and was really a fine running craft; besides, the captain consumed no time unnecessarily by the way. When forced to land for a supply of wood, he ran ashore himself, where he remained, constantly urging the crew and the deck passengers, (whom he compelled to give their aid,) to greater activity and expedition; and when the last stick was deposited on the guards, the boat was always in readiness to push out again, with an ample supply of steam. He refused to take in more freight, and declined rounding to for more passengers.

The night was fair, all the stars being out, and we continued onward with unabated speed. The weather was warm, and many of us remained on the boiler deck till a late hour to avoid the perforations of the musquitoes, which had taken possession of our state rooms. The velocity of the boat produced such a current of air on the forward deck, that they were unable to buzz about our ears. Nothing disperses a cloud of musquitoes so quickly and so effectually as a smart puff of wind. Some of the passengers, however, braved the fury of the insects at the exciting card table. They "bled freely," both in pocket and from their veins, and seemed to evince most impatience under the first-named system of phlebotomy. I noticed that those whose circumstances were the most desperate, and who could least afford to lose, were the boldest to bet, and the most eager to play. I had my stakes safely under lock and key, and refused every invitation to join the hazardous game. I remembered my adventure on the old Belvidere, and resolved not to play. I kept my resolution on the Earthquake.

Towards midnight I retired to rest, first anointing my face and hands, and other parts likely to be exposed to the assaults of the annoying insects, with the oil of pennyroyal,

which is particularly annoying to all kinds of tiny blood-suckers. I slept soundly. The rumbling of machinery, and the motion of a steamer on the western waters, never fail to produce profound slumber, if one's mind is at ease. The boat acts like a vast cradle, and gently rocks one to sleep. True, it sometimes acts as a baby-jumper, and tosses the slumberers helter-skelter through the air;—but one must not think of such a thing if he desires to have a refreshing nap.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of a tremendous hissing of steam. It seemed like a ton of shot poured down from a high tower on plates of tin. I dressed myself and walked up on the hurricane deck, making my way pretty well back to the stern. The sound of escaping steam always has a disagreeable effect on my nerves, and involuntarily produces a disposition to remove my "corpse" as far as possible from the locality of the boilers. I have been often laughed at and rallied by others, when seen briskly walking towards the hindmost part of the vessel; but their rallying has rarely sufficed to disturb an equanimity based upon the consciousness of being distant from the focus of danger. Now-a-days, however, the boilers are placed so very far back—reaching almost to the centre of the vessel—that they have a fair sweep when they blow up, ripping everything fore and aft; and one is quite at a loss to find a place of security. I hope they will adopt the plan of taking passengers in tow, and have floating saloons constructed for that purpose. The one who first seizes upon this hint, may make a fortune. He shall certainly have my patronage.

The hissing and whistling continued, so that when I stood on the top deck, "solitary and alone," I was completely enveloped in a white cloud of steam, and was for some moments unable to perceive whence it proceeded.

Finally, when I succeeded in getting a view of the state of things around me, I found that the vapor did not come from the Earthquake, but from another steamer that lay beside us, which had just landed. Her captain wisely preferred to lose the steam generated in her boilers than to run the risk of their bursting. Our boat was quiet enough, economizing all its resources. We were at Cairo—that famous city yet to spring up at the mouth of the Ohio—and the steamer along side of us was the dreaded ARK.

I learned that we had been lying there nearly an hour, taking in a large supply of wood, and that the Ark had just come in for a similar supply. So we still had the start of her. I soon found that the ambitious desire to beat her was fast spreading from the captain and crew to the passengers, who, coming out one after another in succession, expressed the hope that we might again leave the Ark in our rear.

While I stood on the hurricane deck the cable was loosened, and the Earthquake putting out, rushed up the stream, trembling at every joint, and making the woods on either side quake with the reverberations of its roar. A long white mark was left behind us as we receded from the Ark, showing the violence of our progress. I remained on deck until we had turned out of sight of Cairo, and long after the rest of the passengers—summoned by the steward's bell—had gone below. I had no stomach for any breakfast until I was satisfied the terrible Earthquake had worked off its palpable superabundance of steam, and until I supposed there was a probability of having time accorded me to digest a meal. I did not profess to be profoundly wise in regard to the philosophy of explosions; *but common* sense taught me that when the steam was out, *it could not* burst the boilers, and that the furious rushing

of the boat was an indication that it was getting out as fast as possible. Nor could I help reflecting that when a blow up did take place, some were killed and some escaped; and I had a peculiar desire, in the event of the Earthquake gaping open, to be included in the latter category.

I made my appearance at the table in time to get my breakfast, and with an improved appetite, for the cool fresh air of the morning had braced me amazingly. While I was seated at the table, the old Snarleyyow from New York came creeping out of his state-room and sat down opposite to me. His vinegar face seemed more acid than ever; and, as he did not deign to speak to me, I politely reciprocated the compliment by not speaking to him. Still I could not wholly forbear the temptation to speak *at* him. I saw that he turned up his nose at everything set before him, and made mouths particularly at the coffee, because there was no cream to put in it. So I called for a cup beyond my usual number, and took occasion to praise its flavor. The old gentleman put down his cup, and rose from the table without finishing his meal. He spoiled his stomach to spite the table; and only afforded amusement for the mischievous cabin boys. It is a common saying, when there is no remedy for an evil, it is well to "grin and bear it." My experience in traveling convinces me that it is best to bear it without grinning.

When I walked forward, I found the passengers talking of nothing else but the race—always a word of ill-omen to me on a steamer. It seemed to produce a pleasurable excitement among them, in which I could not participate. I might have been somewhat differently affected, had I not had all my fortune on board, and had I not been on the highway to matrimony.

Again I ascended to the hurricane deck, and looked *down the river.* To my dismay, I beheld a column of ste

some five miles below. Whether the boat was, or was not the Ark, it was unquestionably gaining on us; for there was no steamer that nigh us when I went down to breakfast. The captain, the pilot, indeed all of us, gazed at it in silence. It was too evident that we were pursued by a superior boat. I asked no questions and made no requests, as all seemed intent on keeping the Earthquake at its utmost speed; nothing I could have said against it would have produced any effect. I merely descended and walked back to my state-room. I pulled off my coat, and opening the door on the outside to let in the fresh air, threw myself on my berth, and attempted to read one of the light works that I had purchased from a newsboy in St. Louis. But the author, whoever he was, (his name was wisely withheld,) had not the power to beguile me. His imaginary love fits did not touch my heart, nor his piratical encounters dispel my fears. So truth is not only stranger, but stronger than fiction.

At the end of a couple of hours, I walked on the hurricane deck again, without exchanging a word with any one in my progress thither. I now saw the Ark plainly enough, for she was not more than half a mile behind us. The captain was evidently trying her metal, for she ploughed the water like one of the North river steamers.

I sat down on a bale of hemp to await the result, and partly to conceal the tremor that seized upon the joints of my knees. There were many others on the top deck, among whom were several of the females from the ladies' cabin, who seemed to enjoy the sight as much as any of the rest.

Our firemen, while at breakfast, had suffered the steam to escape faster than it was generated, and now the captain was almost furious in his orders to throw in wood and rosin. However, it required time to produce the desired

effect; and in the meantime the Ark ran up gracefully (oh, very gracefully!) along side of us. She also had been making pretty violent efforts to diminish the distance between us, and had consumed the major part of her steam. But when we were precisely even, bow with bow, and when I expected to see her pass by us (hoping she would leave us out of sight, and annoy us no more), our sweating firemen below, who had been skipping about the doors of the furnaces like sable imps from the nether regions, had done their work so effectually, that the Earthquake itself quivered with the internal impulse, and shooting forward, absolutely glided past its puffing and groaning antagonist, amid the huzzas, exulting screams, and frenzied excitement of the men, women, and even the children on our decks.

The Ark's bow, as she fell behind, turned towards our stern, and she ran along in our wake only a few yards distant from us. I could distinctly see that she was preparing to make another effort. Her firemen were in a savage commotion, and soon two dark whirling columns of smoke rose from her chimneys. But our imps of darkness were not idle. We had our sable columns too, sometimes mingled with red angry flame, as the rosin and lard were applied.

For many painful moments (to me) each boat maintained its position. The distance between them continued about the same. It occurred to me that if any accident, however slight, should happen to our machinery, and cause us to stop, the Ark, immediately in our rear, must inevitably run into us. I thought, besides, that our relative positions might be maintained equally as well, and with much more comfort, at less expense, and vastly greater safety, if both boats would only consent to dispense with about

half their steam. But their commanders had no such thoughts.

At length, when we got to a long bend of the river, the Ark sheered out to the left, as if she designed to take advantage of a more direct course to the distant point ahead—viz., the inside track. Her steam was now at its greatest pressure, and it was in vain that the Earthquake essayed to defeat the object. She likewise diverged to the left; but when the steamers came together again, the Ark was even with us. Our firemen relaxed not their exertions, and for a long time we seemed to maintain our position. At last, to my infinite gratification, it was announced from below that the "combustibles" were getting short. The last barrel of rosin had been knocked on the head, and the last keg of lard had been pulled up the hatches. While I rejoiced at this intelligence, the rest seemed dismayed. There was an old lady on board, whose husband was well known as one of the richest farmers of Illinois; and the wife was pretty well known too, as being the "better horse," and assuming rather more than feminine authority in her better half's business. She was, however, well skilled in speculations, and was generally very lucky in devising plans to get the highest price for their produce. This horrible old lady sat on the other end of the bale of hemp I occupied. She had been sitting there a long time without uttering a single word; but her toothless mouth was drawn up to a purse-like pucker, while her chin almost touched her nose. Her little sharp eyes sparkled like a serpent's, as she watched the progress of the race. I supposed at first that she was partaking of my painful alarm, inasmuch as she was a woman, and an old woman at *that*. *No such* thing. When it was understood that the "*combustibles*" were failing, she beckoned the captain to

come to her, with a commanding gesture, which indicated nerves of iron rather than flesh and blood.

"See here, Captain," said she, in a squeaking voice, "I am a true grit Kentuckian, from the old Boonsboro settlement, on the Kentucky river. I have seen the boys chase the Indians, and run their blood horses. I have raised race horses myself, and have a spirit in me that can't stand being beat. I have twenty casks of bacon hams on board, which are at your service. They will make as hot a fire as anything else—I have tried them; for my cook once burnt down my kitchen with a fat ham. Take them, and go ahead!"

Such was the substance of her speech. The captain made no reply, but hastened below. In a few moments the atmosphere was loaded with the fumes of the wholesale fry; and the Earthquake, which had begun to lose ground, held its own again. The boats were now close beside each other, and the passengers amused themselves by occasionally stepping from one deck to the other.

I looked at the shore, near which we were now running, and for the first time was enabled to realize the fearful speed we were making. The trees danced by us like the flitting creatures of a vision; and the occasional houses, orchards, and fields beyond, seemed to be twisting, whirling and flying about, as if indeed "all creation had broken loose." I closed my eyes on the thrilling scene, and strove for some time to banish the startling apprehensions, which held me on the rack, from my mind. It was a vain endeavor.

We were now approaching Paducah, and both boats were striving more furiously than ever to gain the victory. The landing in front of the town was crowded with spectators. They took a most lively interest in the exciting

scene, as could be seen from the waving of hats and upraised arms. Our wheels hummed like whirligigs in the water, while the escape pipes coughed like claps of thunder. On we rushed, the Earthquake being next to the shore, and not twenty paces distant from it. Most of the passengers on the hurricane deck collected around the pilot house in front, while I maintained my position in the rear. But in the intensity of my alarm I had unconsciously risen from my seat, and now stood upright on the bale of hemp. The old lady sat still, her livid lips compressed, if possible, still more closely than ever, while not a sigh escaped her, and not an exhibition of the slightest tremor.

Both steamers had freight to put out at Paducah; but neither seemed disposed to stop. We had the inside track, and the Ark strove in vain to head us. At length, when we were even with the landing, the Ark's machinery stopped abruptly; she fell back and landed. From the moment her wheels ceased to work, her considerate engineer had begun to let off the steam, which escaped with a deafening sound, forming an expanded cloud over head, and creating astonishment that such an immense amount of vapor could have been confined in so small a compass as three boilers.

The Earthquake ran ahead a few rods, and then stopped. The freight to be delivered there had been previously placed on the gangway, so that it might be rolled off without a moment's delay: this was done. No steam escaped from our boilers; all was husbanded for the renewal of the struggle. Indeed, there was no diminution of the exertions of the infuriated firemen during the brief delay at the landing. Wood and hams of bacon were still crammed into the jaws of the gaping furnace. The huge chimneys *grew red-hot,* and all the passengers were forced to retreat *from the boiler-deck.*

As soon as the freight was put ashore, the men were ordered to push out instantly, which they lost no time in doing, for the lowest subordinate on board was now thoroughly imbued with the prevailing anxiety and determination to win the race. The merchant for whom the freight had been delivered was seen coming down from his store with a bag of money in his hand. But our captain would not wait to receive it. When he reached the water's edge the planks were pulled in, and the crew were pushing the boat out into the current. The vessel turned out quickly, so that the bow pointed up the stream. We were some sixty feet from the shore when the order was given to go ahead. The engineer obeyed. The wheels made two or three revolutions—and then—oh how shall I describe it! I can never bring my mind to reflect upon what ensued, without a renewal of the thrill of agony which seized upon my soul. I saw the huge black chimneys shoot high up in the air—pieces of machinery, timbers, fragments of hissing red hot iron—human limbs separated from their bodies—bodies without limbs—men, women and children—all in one horrible promiscuous mass, hurled upward, in the twinkling of an eye, and followed, like the blinding flash of lightning, by such an awful explosion as seemed to rend the heavens and the earth. A blindness, a deafness, a total insensibility then kindly intervened, and obscured from my vision the appalling spectacle.

I do not know how long it was before my consciousness returned. My last impression was that of having been enveloped in steam, which collapsed my lungs. The first thing I observed, on recovering my senses, was that I lay extended, with my face on the earth, and that my clothes were saturated with water. After one or two feeble attempts to rise, I only succeeded in turning over on my side. The

first object that met my eyes was the body of a female, *without a head*, lying within a few inches of me. I turned and looked in the opposite direction. There, too, were the dead and the dying. I sat up, and gazed in bitter agony on the most heart-rending scene that ever mortal eyes beheld. I was in the midst of a long row of the dead and the dying, which had been either thrown ashore, or rescued from the water. Men and women were busy around us, striving to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. Groans, and cries, and shrieks were heard on every hand. Carriages and litters came to take us away—some to lingering couches, others to the grave.

I found, upon an examination of my limbs, that I had not received any material injury. The only pain I felt was a scalding sensation in the lungs, which seemed to diminish, as I breathed more deeply. Though satisfied of my own safety, the miserable condition of those around me again overwhelmed me with horror. I fell back, closed my eyes, and stopped my ears, in the vain hope to obtain a brief respite from the realization of the mournful event. The picture was graven in my brain, and the unhappy spectacle could not be hidden from my mind. At last they were all removed but me. I was startled by the rude hand of a cartman placed upon my shoulder. I turned and looked him in the face.

"You are not dead?" said he.

"No," I replied; "nor do I believe I am hurt much," I continued, as I made an unsuccessful effort to rise up. "Pray, tell me how many have perished."

"Nobody will ever know how many," said the driver. "The cabin passengers were registered, and all of this class *that cannot* be found, will be missed and counted. But *the poor deck* passengers had not their names put down.

They suffered the most, as usual. The few of them that survive, say there must have been fifty on deck. But ten escaped. Of the cabin passengers, it is supposed only fifteen were killed—but as many more are wounded. They counted you as dead."

"But where is the other boat?" I inquired, seeing the Ark alone at the wharf.

"She was blown to pieces. As I came to town, I found several doors of her state-rooms three hundred yards beyond the farthest house. All of her that was not blown away, immediately sunk. They say her hull was split open in the centre, and that she spread out and went down before any one could go to the rescue of the passengers that remained on the wreck."

"But how came I on shore?" I asked.

"I cannot tell—I was not here," said he.

"I can tell you," replied a gentleman who had witnessed the explosion. "I was looking at you when the boat blew up. You stood upon a bale, and towered above the rest. A heavy piece of iron came up through the decks, and carried away the head of a female sitting near you. You still remained standing. When the steam rushed up, and all the decks, as well as the hull, sank down in one chaotic mass, I perceived you still in your erect attitude, as a puff of wind blew aside the cloud of vapor that enveloped you. Thus you went down. When you reached the water, the bale on which you stood turned over, and then, for the first time, your position was changed. You sank down on your side, without lifting your arms, and the water closed over you. You rose again, pale and stiff, and was brought ashore in a yawl, supposed to be dead."

I could now stand up—and with a little assistance, for I

was very weak, I walked up to the nighest hotel, and was conducted to a room, where I lay in bed while they dried my clothes before a fire. When this was done, I rose again and dressed myself. I sat down to reflect. My first thought, then, (I must own it,) was about my money. I had heard nothing of my trunk. If it, too, had been sent sailing through the air, I had no doubt it had burst in its course like a bomb-shell, and scattered my treasure in such a manner that I would never recover it. On the other hand, if it had gone down with the boat, still the chances were twenty to one against my ever seeing it again.

These were bitter reflections, and banished the remaining effects of the steam and the submersion. I no longer felt pain in my lungs, nor as much sympathy as at first for my fellow-sufferers. On the contrary, the sickness of despair seized upon my heart. If I was doomed thus to lose everything I had hitherto been toiling for, it was almost a matter of regret that I, too, had not perished with the rest.

I had a few bank notes in a belt round my body. They were Virginia notes, which I was unable to convert into specie in St. Louis without submitting to a discount I was unwilling to bear. I unbuttoned my vest and took off the belt. It was wet and warm with the returning heat of my body. I spread the smoking notes on the table before the fire. They were stained, but not ruined. I clutched them as the last remnant of my fortune, and counted them over and over again, as if this process could increase their number, or magnify their denominations. They amounted to about one hundred dollars, which, with some two hundred I had in Philadelphia, formed my entire wealth.

But I could not, at first, realize my sudden destitution.

I felt strong now, and walking down stairs without difficulty, I went out to the scene of the disaster. I wandered among the remains of the wreck upon the shore in search of my treasure. I could find fragments of human beings, but no money. I made known my loss, and offered a liberal reward for its recovery. Other trunks were found floating on the surface of the stream, but not mine; while not a vestige of it had been seen on the land.

Others involved in the calamity had large sums about them, but sustained no serious losses. Theirs were in checks and drafts; mine—oh, the infatuation of our foolish resolves!—I had determined should be in heavy metal, which was to save me some seventy-five dollars in exchange. And it had been for the purpose of saving a few paltry dollars that I had taken passage on the ill-fated boat!

CHAPTER XI.

Would that I might obliterate the next few months of my life from my memory! But that may not be. Well, then, why record the events which followed? Expressly that my example may be a warning to others. I ran through a career of folly, which hundreds in destitute circumstances embark in, to find in the end what I found—disappointment and mortification. Such generally sink into the grave, or into impenetrable obscurity, their history—which, if once stated in candor, might deter others from pursuing a similar course—unknown. I have no hesitation, therefore, in recapitulating my errors, if that may be the means, as I trust it will, of deterring some few roman-

tic young men or young ladies from casting themselves into a vortex as delusive in reality as it is bright in appearance, and which too frequently leads to destruction; while never—no, never—does it conduct any one to the full realization of his hopes! But "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and I will not anticipate.

For several days I wandered about the wharf in the vicinity of the scene of my disaster. At the close of each day the small particle of hope with which I set out in the morning, was more and more diminished, and finally became extinct. I grew thoughtful, silent, almost desperate. I was calm in outward appearance, while burning meditations consumed me within. One moment my thoughts ran back rapidly through the past, when I had been happy without appreciating my condition. Then I reflected how easily I might have spared a few more dollars, and taken passage on the Ark, where all would have been safe and well—but this was only adding fuel to the fire. My fortune was gone, irrecoverably gone, and why should I draw upon the past for additional pangs? I then thought of the future, and that was but little better. Blanche, too—all hopes of her must be relinquished. A beggar could not aspire to the possession of her hand. I might go back to the hospitable wilds of Missouri, and accumulate another little fortune; but this would be a tedious process, ever mingled with the intolerable remembrance of what I had lost, and what I might have enjoyed, had not misfortune overtaken me. The very contemplation of it seemed like forcing back the current of my life. I wanted not solitude now. My mind was seized with a desperate frenzy, and I could not brook deliberation. I felt that some pursuit was *necessary* which would distract my thoughts, rather than *one that might* lead me to brood over the past. The words

of my father occurred to me more than once; but I could not conceive that such a calamity was the work of Providence for some good or wise purpose. In truth, I was tempted to reproach what I considered to be the injustice of the Supreme Ruler of events, in permitting such a calamity to befall me and all the rest that suffered. I could not be convinced of the possibility of any good growing out of such a disaster.

I resolved to pursue my journey eastward, but not to Norfolk; and so I took passage on the next boat going up the river. I was now more indifferent about my fate; and never hesitated to occupy a seat at the card-table directly over the boilers. I indulged in play, and in any other amusement likely to keep my thoughts from running back to the past. There was one means, however, too often resorted to by others in similar circumstances, which I avoided. I did not, and never could, go to the bottle. But, as I have said, I sought mental excitement at the card-table on the boat. At first I won, and won pretty freely sometimes; but it happened that I invariably lost nearly all I won before I rose from the table. Upon the whole, my playing neither diminished nor increased to any great extent the funds I possessed.

A small sum in still remained my pocket on reaching Philadelphia, which, added to the amount to my credit on the books of the firm which had made disbursements for me, was enough to keep me from want for some time. The calamity of which I was one of the victims had been published in all the papers, and the loss of my trunk formed one of the paragraphs of the narrative. The merchants of whom I had been in the habit of purchasing my goods, proposed, with a generosity which did them *honor, to sell me* another stock entirely on credit, pro-

vided I had any desire to try my luck again. But I declined the offer. Then one of them offered me a liberal salary as a salesman in his establishment. This I acceded to. But it was not long before my new employment became insufferably irksome.

While the novelty of my situation continued, and while I was kept actively egaged in the business of my employers, the time seemed to pass lightly enough: but when, in the midst of a dull season, I sat down like the rest, my thoughts immediately reverted to the past, and I could not avoid making a contrast between my present condition and that of independence and almost affluence which I had so recently enjoyed. My employers, perceiving my fits of sadness, and rightly conjecturing the cause, did everything in their power to dissipate my cares, and to encourage me to persevere in my new career. I saw their kind solicitude, and felt grateful. I was familiar with the manners and modes of thought of the western merchants, and every one whose custom I was so fortunate as to draw to the house of my employers, acceded to my wishes. There can be no doubt, if I had continued a few years in this kind of employment, that I would have repaired all my losses. My acquaintance among the western merchants was very extensive, and they would naturally have preferred to deal with a house whose salesman had been taken from among themselves.

But now my evil star seemed to be in the ascendant. I resolved not to remain, and announced my determination to the firm. They parted with me reluctantly, after offering an increase of salary, and a prospective interest in the profits of the house. At that time there were few, perhaps not any, young men from the far west in Market street—and the brief time I was there, sufficed to show the advan-

tages to be derived from a true knowledge of western character.

When I abandoned my employment, I had still a few—and only a few—hundred dollars. I took an attic room in my boarding-house, that I might be undisturbed in my inevitable meditations. There I shut myself up for some days—a prey to grief and melancholy. I had just sense enough left to find out pretty soon that this mode of life could afford no remedy for a mind diseased; and so I sought distraction in the drawing-room of the establishment, where I always found lively and gay company, music, and all the inexhaustible diversions of accomplished female society. I attended the ladies to concerts, to the theatre, and other places of amusement—but rarely to church. Yet even this kind of life did not long beguile me. I thought often of the indispensable necessity of providing for my future support, and as my present supply of money was gradually diminishing, my anxiety increased. I hoped something would turn up in my behalf—I cared not what; while the idea of returning to any ordinary business pursuit, never occurred to me without being speedily dismissed with contempt.

I was rapidly approaching lunacy, and my course was only accelerated by the habit I had contracted of daily perusing and re-perusing the works of Lord Byron, in the solitude of my chamber. To one in my desperate circumstances, whose course of reading had been pretty extensive in the flowery paths of light literature, and whose nature was, perhaps, in an unusually high degree, tinged with the dangerous hue of romance, the flights of that unparalleled genius in the world of passion were the least likely of any others that could have fallen into my hands, to bring

me to my senses. They increased my madness, my recklessness, and desperation.

From his impassioned verse, I turned to the noble poet's letters, and was particularly struck with the vast amount of money he boasted of receiving for his MSS. I gloated over the page, until the sums set down seemed to rise up in heaps of glittering gold before me, and invite my hand to seize upon them, that I might resume my career of prosperity which had been so abruptly checked. Why could I not write poetry, too, and also realize such enormous wealth? Such was the presumptuous interrogatory I dared to propound to myself. Byron had his woes, and I had mine—and there the similarity ended. But I did not pursue the comparison any farther. The idea had seized upon me, and fired my excited mind. I thought of nothing now but the emoluments and the glory of a literary career. Of its disappointments and miseries, Byron made no mention, and they did not occur to me.

I seized my pen and perpetrated several stanzas, which were offered to a family newspaper. They were accepted, and printed with some commendations. This was almost fatal to me; for it made me believe that I was really possessed of genius, and at once banished from my mind all suggestions of pursuits of another nature. My pen alone was henceforward to constitute my sole means of support, notwithstanding I had received nothing for my stanzas. I understood, however, that such bagatelles were considered as gratuitous contributions; and, filled with thoughts of the immensity of fortune and fame I was to acquire in the future, I had every disposition to be liberal with the publishers. But there was one thing which surprised me. I *discovered,* upon enlarging my literary acquaintance—for *there is a sort* of free masonry among the novitiate literati,

as well as among men of acknowledged talents—that there was a prodigious number of scribblers of verse and prose in the city, both male and female, and that not one of them, as far as I could learn, had made a fortune by the pen. Nor had many of them even a very exalted niche in the temple of fame. But still they never ceased to write. How they lived, was to me a great mystery.

But Byron had not acquired his fame and amassed his fortune by writing sonnets and tales for the papers and magazines—and neither would I attempt it. I would not deal in such small matters. And above all, my infatuated mind now shrunk with horror from the contemplation of any of the dray-horse, honest business pursuits of the day—and particularly from the recollection of the time when I sold goods by the retail in a *hen-house*, out in the western wilds. I would as soon have proclaimed that I had been a counterfeiter or a burglar, as to have intimated that I had once measured goods by the yard. So far had been my progress in this very prevalent species of insanity.

I lost no time in purchasing several quires of foolscap paper to begin with. I determined to write a long poem, which of course I resolved should be a great one. I was not precisely certain what description of a poem it should be; and in truth, I was hardly able to distinguish between an epic and an elegy. It should be original, wild, rambling, bold, startling; in short, it was to be different from anything that had preceded it, and beyond the imitation of any who were to come after me. My first and greatest difficulty was to fix upon a title; and it was a very great difficulty, for I had not adopted any particular subject to constitute its body. I sat for an hour with my pen suspended over the page, racking my perturbed mind for a *title, and finally* adopted "the Rover." This would give

me scope enough. I might go whithersoever I pleased; and so I did. I dived into the past and soared into the future; traversed our own country, and crossed the great ocean to compliment Byron, Shakspeare, and all the renowned literary worthies. It was a tribute which I felt was due from me. I hallowed Washington, and immortalized all the heroes of the revolution. I dwelt especially upon the emotions of my own heart, and described with minuteness of detail the impression made by matters and things in general, on my own mind.

The first day and night I accomplished about twenty Spenserian stanzas, and then threw myself down to rest, but not to sleep, for my mind was a boiling caldron of disjointed images and fragmentary fancies. I thought the true inspiration was upon me, and I perused what I had written with delight. Of course others would derive a similar delight from its perusal; and judging by this criterion, I felt assured of success—of fame and fortune. My next ridiculous impulse was to spring up and count the lines of one of Byron's cantos, which had been at first published separately, and then refer to the time which it took him to write it. I made an exact computation, and was gratified to find that I could write as fast as the great poet had written.

I counted the days and weeks which would be consumed in the composition, and then estimated the delay of printing and binding. Time was now an object to me. I longed to read the commendations of the press, to realize the golden harvest, and enjoy the super-eminent distinction in the world which my visions depicted. And above all I sighed for the bright day to come when, with my fortune retrieved, and my merits on the tongues of all, I might present myself before Blanche, like some triumphant hero of romance,

and proudly claim her hand, with the full approbation of her appeased uncle. These were the thoughts that incited me, and which kept my pen in motion. The matter of the work was left to the inspiration of the moment, and was to flow from my pen like words from the mouths of the apostles. When forced to take a modicum of exercise, to relieve the pains and cramps of my inactive limbs, I walked the streets with a conscious superiority. Whenever any one would stare at me, attracted by my abstracted gaze, I thought it might be one who had heard of the great work I was writing, or had, perhaps, when I was absent, found access to my manuscript, and now regarded me with wonder and admiration. Such are the ridiculous fancies of merely moon-stricken scribblers; and it would surprise any one to have a correct knowledge of the astonishing number of this class of subjects that daily wander about the streets of our principal cities, "hoping against hope."

Well, it was not many weeks before my great work was done. I had passed my perihelion, and now wished to attract the gaze of the mortals below. I consumed three whole days revising and transcribing my production. I then sat down and wrote a polite note to an eminent publisher, stating that I had a poem ready for the press, which I desired him to issue. The very next day I had his reply. The note was brought in to me while I was talking to the young ladies in the parlor. I held it in my hand, repressing my anxiety to hasten away to the printers with my manuscript, not doubting that such was the import of the reply. The young ladies desired me to read it, but I declined, merely intimating that the subject to which it related was one of no importance. I had, somehow or other, the prudence, or the luck, to keep my correspondence with *publishers* a profound secret.

I opened the note in the privacy of my chamber. It was brief, and to the point. He simply declined making any additional engagements, in consequence of the precarious condition of the business of the country, &c. &c. I thought this was very strange. He had not read my production; and how could he know but that it might improve his business? I had never supposed, for a moment, that the publisher who got my work would run any risk; and surely a man could not enter into too many engagements which paid him a profit. I felt quite indignant, and wrote to another publisher. His answer was similar to that of the first. I wrote to others, and still it was the same. They all declined. I thought surely there must be a combination to suppress native merit! It was inconceivable to me why they should decline my poem without reading it. How could they know it would not make their fortunes as well as mine? They knew nothing about my capabilities; I might be a genius equal in every respect to Byron, and they might see the day when they should regret having declined to publish my work. Such was my hallucination. But it is precisely the same with hundreds of young gentlemen and ladies at this day. There is a fascination in this description of delusion surpassing ordinary comprehension. Every poetic aspirant in this country, and in most countries, is deluded with the belief that he is gifted above all others, and that he is destined to encircle his brows with an unparalleled halo of glory. He may be told, and it may be demonstrated beyond the possibility of contradiction, that not one perpetrator of poetry in a thousand succeeds in Europe, and that not a single one in this country has ever yet realized sufficient means from the *profits of his* pen (the poetic pen) to support his family; *yet he will* not hesitate a moment to relinquish all other

modes of making a living, and take the desperate chance of winning a substantial triumph which all other poets have failed to achieve!

Such was my case, indubitably; for while I was writing to the different publishers in the several cities, two of my brothers arrived from the West, to purchase fresh supplies of goods, and offered me most advantageous terms, if I would only give up my mad project and accompany them back to Missouri. I refused peremptorily. I told them my lot was cast, and henceforth I would follow the course my star pointed out. Fate had bereft me of the fortune I had amassed in the pursuit of business, and might do it again if I returned to the West. No—I was resolved to make my way through the world by my wits, or fall in the attempt; and I hinted to them the possibility of my succeeding some day in surpassing them all in the pursuit of wealth in my peculiar way, and then it would be a subject of bitter reflection to them that they had attempted to dissuade me. I borrowed some money of them, and we parted.

There was one publisher who desired to see my work and ascertain its merits. Upon this being intimated to me, I took my manuscript to him, and he placed it in the hands of a lady of some literary taste and judgment, who perused it and gave her opinion of its merits. This lady was doubtless an admirer of Byron, and must have been, to some extent, a partaker of the same kind of enthusiasm which actuated me. If she still lives, I hope she will pardon this expression, when she learns the extent of suffering in which her praises contributed to involve me. At the time they were communicated to me, I could have fallen down at her feet and worshiped her. If I had been the possessor of millions, they would have been at her service. But I *never met her.* And the fact that she never approached

my presence, or afforded an opportunity for me to approach her, only heightened my admiration of her. It drove more deeply into my soul the fatal conviction that I was a poet, for it evinced the fact that she was wholly disinterested in her commendations.

The following is a verbatim copy of her note to the publisher:—

"This poem I have attentively perused; it is extremely interesting; it shows a quick imagination and a brilliant intellect. The writer without doubt is a gentleman of profound talent, and is destined at no distant period to shine a bright star in the literary hemisphere.

"I fully appreciate its worth, but am ill calculated to give it a deserving opinion."

The name of course I suppress, because it was not my fortune to realize her prediction. Had I succeeded, it would have been the study of my life how to please and serve that lady; for she seemed to be the only friend I had in the wide world. She alone seemed to appreciate my talents, and to encourage my lofty aspirations.

The bookseller was very naturally influenced by the frank expression of such unbounded encomiums. He promptly agreed to be the publisher, and the poem was placed without delay in the hands of the printer, who executed his part of the work in a faultless manner. It was completed in due time, (although my impatience made the necessary delay seem like a cruelty,) and delivered to the publisher. I marked every step of its progress through the press, through the hands of the binder, to the house of the publisher. I even saw the boy take the presentation copies, with the advertisements, to the different newspaper offices; and then I returned to my garret to ruminate on what was to follow. That night I could not sleep. My

mind was filled with fancies and anticipations which kept me in a fever of excitement. My name was not to the poem, it was true; but would not the poem itself be the subject of conversation in every polite circle the next day? What would the critics write about it? I felt willing to compound for a share of denunciation mingled with plaudits. That my poem would be praised by some of the editors, I did not doubt, inasmuch as the only individual to whom it had been submitted, had felt herself constrained to express so favorable an opinion of its merits. There could have been no partiality to sway her judgment, for she did not know the author. But that some would condemn it, was a matter of course. Still, I looked forward to their condemnation with much complacency—for had not Byron himself been assailed by the Edinburgh reviewers?

The morning came at last, and I took my place at the table, modestly and diffidently. I presumed the company had seen the morning papers. Most of them had learned that I had a poem in press, from seeing the proof sheets brought in by the printer's boy. I ventured to peep at their faces, but did not observe that their eyes were on me. And when the usual conversation began, it was all about Robinson and Helen Jewett, instead of my immortal poem.

I made no inquiries, but rose from the table, and taking an umbrella, (it was raining,) wended my way stealthily to a public reading-room, where they kept the papers, as well as oysters and liquors. I trembled as I approached the file of the "U. S. Gazette." I strove to affect a careless indifference as, glancing over its columns, I looked at the heads of the editorial articles. With a palpitating heart, and a perspiring brow, I read over every paragraph without noticing a line about my production. I then shifted my position to

the "Philadelphia Gazette," and with the same result. It was the same with all, except the "Inquirer," which mildly noticed the reception of the work. This was all very strange to me, then—but subsequently it seemed natural enough. I felt a cold pain at my heart as I withdrew; but it was only momentary. It occurred to me that to read a poem of some sixty pages, and to review it properly, required some little time. I then turned back and examined the advertising columns of the papers, where I found the work set forth by its title in all of them. I returned to my room, expecting to enjoy the praises I had so fondly anticipated, the next day. But the next and the next came and passed away like the first. For weeks I continued to frequent the reading-rooms, and never saw another notice, commendatory or condemnatory, of my work. This was a most astounding and unexpected result. Where was my fame? Where the mint of gold that was to compensate for my lonely labor by the flickering light of the midnight taper? For some time I was plunged more deeply than ever in the darkness of despair. I ascertained that but few copies were sold, and that even these were called for mostly by the miserable poetic tenants of other garrets, who had met with a similar fate.

This ecstacy of folly still exists in all our cities, while none reap the full fruition of their illusory hopes. This narrative of my own pitiable case is painful to give, and it would never have been undertaken, had I not believed it might deter others from pursuing a similar career, inevitably to end in harsh regret and stinging mortification.

I would not be understood as deprecating all attempts at *poetic* success. I would merely warn the young, the ardent, the inexperienced and the incapable, against relying upon a fondly hoped-for success as the means of support.

But those who, in addition to ample means of subsistence, possess sufficient leisure, I should certainly not feel disposed to dissuade from indulging such fancies to a limited extent, if they really believe they have, what I firmly believe I had—genius. I would also warn literary ladies and gentlemen against pronouncing hasty opinions upon the merits of the productions submitted for their perusal. I need not be particularly careful to warn the publishers; they know their own business best.

Still, I was not cured of my fatal hallucination. After floundering some time in the depths of despondency, I rose full-fledged from the ashes of my first immolation. Perhaps I had mistaken the appropriate field for the exercise of my genius. That I had genius, and of a high order, too, I still did not doubt. Perhaps all the editors and poets on the continent, as well as the publishers, were not, as I was at first inclined to believe, in actual combination against me. My work might not really possess the merit I thought it possessed. Besides, the admirers of poetry were select and few in number, compared with the readers of other descriptions of composition. I would make another effort. It should be in prose—a novel—in short, the "Wanderings of ——." I chose Fielding for my model, and set to work with all the ardor and rapidity of a new impulse. I supposed the taste of the majority of readers to be the same that it was when "Tom Jones" was published; else, thought I, why is that work reprinted and circulated so extensively? So I succeeded in rivaling both Fielding and Smollett in licentiousness and vulgarity, but was minus their wit, their humor, and their philosophy. I felt a sort of resentment against the public for its neglect to buy my poem; and was otherwise mad enough in all conscience. I described some of the worst scenes occurring among the

most groveling portions of humanity, without the slightest stint of their phraseology, or of their depraved actions.

The work was completed in an incredible short space of time. It was printed, and failed. The independent public were not to be inveigled into the expenditure of money to enable me to be revenged on them.

Thus ended my second step as a man of the world and author, after the abandonment of my legitimate pursuit. Each step was a manifest descent and departure from the condition of independence and happiness that I had once enjoyed. But still I looked with a sullen eye steadfastly downward. I had not yet the first impulse to turn back, or to look upward. I was conscious of being thwarted—of being miserable and destitute; but still I braved my sad predicament with a firmness and determination worthy of a better cause.

I now floated upon the waves of time, like a dismasted ship, a mere wreck, and reckless whether the winds should waft me outward, or drive me headlong upon the breakers. I never felt, however, the slightest inclination to perpetrate dishonest or dishonorable acts: the counsels and example of my pious parents had secured me against the approach of such evil temptations. But I became prodigal of my existence, and by nourishing the miseries which consumed me, was, by a slow but sure process, laying violent hands upon my own life. Abject dependence on the charity of others, utter destitution, vagabondism! the very thought of such a condition—and such was the inevitable tendency of my course—pierced my heart like a dagger! I no longer found refreshment in quiet slumber. Incessant dreams disturbed my rest. The horrors of bitter and unsuccessful struggles uniformly filled my visions, and I awoke to prefer the reality of the infliction to its hideous aspect.

I grew weak and pale, and began to look for the end. I supposed I should die; but even this conviction did not produce any disposition to retrace my steps. I had defied the worst that fate could do, and still felt a determination to resist even unto death. I knew not precisely what I resisted; but I was convinced that I contended against something; and as I felt that something had ill used me, I desired to have the victory or death. Such is sometimes the perverseness and haughtiness of our nature, even when we have not the means of obtaining food and clothing.

Some forty dollars, now, comprised my entire stock of money. It would be mere folly to try my pen again. It was true my last work, in spite of its many absurdities and its immoral tendency, had been reviewed rather favorably by several sympathizing critics; still it failed to produce me any substantial benefit to compensate for the labor of composition;—though this was, in fact, a small matter. I could not remain in Philadelphia. I was not willing to die where my poor works had been so prematurely buried. Nor could I live where I would be pointed out as a disappointed and unsuccessful author. And yet I knew not whither to go, nor what to do. With no promise of employment, no engagement on which to rely, I resolved to go to another city. I came to this resolution one night during a solitary and aimless stroll through one of the public squares. I say a solitary walk among the crowd, and I say the truth; for there is a painful sense of utter loneliness in mingling with a multitude of fellow-beings, when none of them notice you. More cheerful by far would be the scene in the solitude of some impenetrable desert; for there the company of one's own fancies and meditations might be enjoyed without limitation. But to a person in my condition, one's own thoughts are his enemies and assailants, and I sought distraction.

I had never injured any mortal on earth; had never perpetrated any description of crime; and yet, the thought that I should be reduced to such a state of misery almost rent the heart that indulged it.

Having formed a determination to leave the city the next morning, I walked briskly in the direction of my boarding-house, to make preparations for the journey. As I passed along Chestnut street, I happened to cast my eyes towards the brilliant saloon of one of the fashionable hotels, which was filled with gay strangers. I paused abruptly, for I beheld through the open window the friend of my youth, the object of my adoration—Blanche. I stood and gazed. She was sitting on a sofa, arrayed in lawns, laces, jewels, and surrounded by an admiring crowd. But the one who was the most diligent in his attentions, was a young gentleman of fine stature, and noble brow. I had struggled to teach myself to regard Blanche as one lost to me forever. She was involved in the failure of my literary projects. All my bright hopes were crushed together. Blanche was relinquished with the rest. But in relinquishing her, the idea had not occurred to me that she might be appropriated by any one else.

I stood immovable as a statue, and gazed on that fair, but maddening scene. Gradually one after another—the dreadful uncle among the rest—retired from my view, and Blanche and her young gallant were left alone to continue their half-whispered conversation. She happened to look out in the direction of the place where I was standing, and I supposed my eyeballs gleamed upon her like orbs of fire. She started, and rose. What were the words addressed to her by the gentleman at her side, or what she replied, I could not hear. But I saw her ineffectual attempt to smile, with lips as pale as marble, and I sup-

posed she was striving to conceal the true cause of her excitement. She came, followed by her attendant, towards the window. I retreated across the street, and ascended the steps of the arcade. When I turned, I saw them standing on the iron balcony. Blanche had not lost sight of me. Her eyes were doubtless still fixed upon the dim outline of my form, when I paused within the shadow of one of the arches. She could not be sure, but she evidently appeared to think, that it was myself she gazed upon. She was abstracted, while her friend seemed to become more assiduous in his attentions. It was a place well adapted for a tender declaration, and I fancied that he was availing himself of the opportunity. Presently, I saw him make a profound bow, and withdraw from her presence, leaving her alone. She did not turn her head when his parting words were addressed to her, but continued to gaze in the direction of my position. Something whispered to me that she had given my stranger rival his quietus, even while I looked upon her. I felt a measure of relief from this conviction, but did not dare to approach her. She knew of my loss of fortune, but not of my present degradation. I could not present myself in such a predicament. She might scorn to recognize one who had thus abandoned himself—and I scorned to be either an object of pity, or a wretch to make her a participator in my misfortunes. Resolving to address her a letter, taking my final leave of her, at no distant day, I embraced an opportunity, when a company of six or eight came by, to mingle with the crowd, and pursue my lonely walk. After going some distance, I turned aside, and observed that she still stood alone upon the balcony, and that she still kept her face in its original position. There I left her, and returned to the privacy of my dreary room.

The next morning I took passage for another city. But all cities were alike to me now, as I carried with me the source of my misery. More than once I was seized with utter despair, and hoped that death would put an end to my sufferings before my scanty supply of money was entirely gone. I took cheap lodgings, so as to prolong my means of payment until I should meet with some unexpected good fortune, or sink quietly into the grave.

Once or twice a precarious description of employment, (I still rejected all other modes of making a living than with my pen—determined to be a literary martyr)—which a generous and gifted literary friend, who still watched my downward course, and desired my ultimate success, threw in my way. These were the mere fitful resuscitations preceding eventual literary death.

Time dragged on in this manner, until spring, the season that brought the western merchants eastward. It once occurred to me that I might replenish my finances, by seeking them out. Not one, I felt sure, would refuse to lend me a moderate sum of money. I had never known one to refuse. But now I had reached the lowest round of my downward course, and why should I desire a prolongation of my misery? I determined that I would do nothing myself, but leave all to chance. And while I sat in my gloomy apartment, and came to this conclusion, I felt a strange kind of relief in my recklessness of the present, oblivion of the past, and contempt of the future. I even laughed aloud in the maniacal ecstasy of my strange exemption from the tortures which had hitherto incessantly preyed upon my mind. I then took up my pen to bid a final adieu to Blanche—I could not bear the thought of writing to my mother. No, the letter to Blanche should be my last act. I wrote fervently. I described everything just as it had

occurred. I told her how I had long admired, and then how deeply I had loved her; not omitting to state my intention to have declared myself in form, and solicited her hand, when the fatal catastrophe scattered my money and my hopes to the winds. I filled the sheet with my half-subdued ravings, and closed with an eternal adieu. That she might not know my address, I determined to dispatch the letter by a private hand to Philadelphia, where it should be mailed.

I have said that I could not bear the thought of writing to my mother. But my letter to Blanche, by touching a mysterious connecting link in my memory, produced some sad, but not altogether painful fancies. The joys of my childhood rose in retrospection; and father, mother, Blanche, were with me again. It was a moving panorama, and I followed the vision. I re-perused the letters of Blanche, which I still preserved. Once more my heart was partially imbued with those Christian influences she always strove to inculcate; and this led to the death-bed scene of my father —his dying words—and my meditations at his grave.

I tore open the sealed letter and added a postscript—a faithful transcript of my sudden emotions, and concluded by declaring that I would immediately seek the counsel of some pious clergyman, and be guided by his advice; but reiterated my intention never to presume to thrust my unworthy self again in her presence.

The counsel of the pious minister was freely accorded me, and I determined as soon as I could become prepared, to seek admission into the church, and die, as my Christian father had done, with a full conviction of an eternal future, and a firm hope of a happy existence in it. A star, a far-off star of hope, now beamed upon my heart. Its twinkling rays, at first feeble, and scarcely perceptible, seemed to increase daily, until my heart became at length

fully illuminated with its glorious light. It was the star of Bethlehem. My desires, my purposes, my disposition, all were undergoing a change; and my state of abject misery was being converted into a condition of hope, faith and happiness. Hope, that I might be enabled to retrieve the past; faith, that I had discovered the means of doing so; happiness, in the conviction that if I performed my duty, no evils could overwhelm me here, or assail me in the life to come.

One day I was most unexpectedly confronted in the street by my old friend, Elijah Sage. My first impulse was to avoid him; but the next moment better thoughts prevailed. He might know my history if he desired it. But he had evidently heard it from others.

"Luke," said he, taking my hand, "I have a message, as well as some information, for you. But you must first promise me to get in the cars, which will start in fifteen minutes for Philadelphia; and that, when there, you will proceed directly to the counting-room of Messrs. Y. S. & K. Will you promise?"

"I cannot," said I.

"Why not?"

"To tell you the truth," I continued, "I have not the money I once possessed, and it is prudent for me to observe due economy in my expenditures. You know, as a merchant, I should consider whether there is any profit likely to be realized from the undertaking."

Elijah stared at me a moment, astonished at my calmness and my smile; and then pulling out his pocket-book, told me to take what I wanted. I refused, and he stared again.

"How much have you?" he asked.

"Five dollars, after paying my board."

"That will do," said he, putting his pocket-book back. Then I stared at him. "That will be sufficient to carry you to Philadelphia. I say you will not lose by the trip."

"Then I promise," said I. "But what is this information? What message have you?"

"You will find, at the counting-room named, a letter for you from Norfolk, Va., marked '*immediate and important.*' The message is from your brother Joseph, who is there. He says ——"

"Never mind what he says, Elijah!" I replied, hurrying away abruptly, without waiting for the message. I paid the good old landlady the last stiver that I owed her, and soon found myself on the way to Philadelphia, thinking of nothing but the letter. What could Blanche say in reply to my final adieu? Would her letter also contain a final adieu? Such thoughts alone occupied my mind.

Six hours sufficed to annihilate the space. I was met at the front door of Y. S. & K.'s establishment, by Joseph, and several western acquaintances. I rushed through them, after brief salutations, and did not pause until I clutched the letter. Then I strove to make my way out with as little ceremony as I had observed on entering, but I was forcibly detained by Joseph.

"Luke," said he, "are you mad?"

"I will be, Joseph, I fear, if you keep me a minute from reading this letter," said I, struggling to depart.

"Why not sit down and read it here?" he inquired.

"No, I must be alone," said I.

"Now, Luke," said he, "I think I can make you forget all about the letter."

"You can't," said I.

"I can," said he. "Your trunk has been found, and I have brought it on with me, with your money safe."

"You can't!" I still repeated. "But now I shall go to your hotel instead of my old garret. Drive to the City Hotel!" said I, springing into a hackney coach, and vanishing with the letter in my hand.

When I was alone in my room, with trembling hands I broke open the seal of the epistle.

"Luke," said Blanche, "if you have seen proper to afflict yourself without reason, it was cruel to afflict Blanche also, who never did you any harm. And now, if you persist in dying, you may have the consolation, if the fact can console you, of knowing that Blanche will die also, murdered by you. * * * * You declare your love, and announce your purpose never to see me more. Would it not have been generous to have withheld the declaration, and left me in doubt? Luke, did you know that the passion was mutual? You have spoken plainly, at last; and I will do so too. Never, since we first parted, no, never for a moment, have I entertained the shadow of a thought that I could or would bestow my hand on any other than yourself—and such is the case still. * * * * * Luke, I have been addressed by several since we parted last, and all have abandoned the pursuit on learning my purpose, which I have frankly made known to them. My uncle took me to the falls of Niagara, Saratoga Springs, and divers other gay places last summer; but all in vain: he found that it was impossible to wean me from my first attachment. On my return, I pronounced my last positive rejection of the suit of the one whom my uncle preferred. *Luke,* we were standing on the balcony of a hotel in

Philadelphia, when he desired to know my decision. At that moment I thought I beheld your pale features, and that you cast upon me a look of reproach and sadness. A monosyllable sufficed for my petitioner, and I did not even have the curiosity to look after him, and observe how deeply he was disappointed and piqued. I had eyes only for the vision before me, if vision it was. I felt that Providence had linked our destinies together by adamantine chains, and I had no disposition to rupture them if they had been formed of a weaker material. Luke, was it you? Oh, if it was, how cruel not to come and speak to me! * * * * * * Luke, when I learned through the newspapers of your loss on that terrible steamer, my mind was made up. It was my fixed determination to place myself and my little fortune in your keeping, if you desired it, as soon as we met. How *could* you suppose that the loss of your money might involve the loss of my affection? No, Luke, you have not yet learned fully the character of Blanche. In misfortune she will cling the more closely to you, and be all the bolder in her ministrations of solace and encouragement. * * * * *

"Now I will surprise you. I have shown your letter to my uncle—all excepting the postscript, which pleased me most, and formed the foundation of my present hopes. My uncle sent away for your poem and novel, and read them both before making any response. He then brought them to me to read, with an air of pleasure. He said, although he was no judge of the merits of such productions, yet as he believed them to contain indications of respectable talents, and of a *lofty ambition*, he announced his purpose not to oppose our marriage, if such a thing should be desired by us! Luke, how could he suppose you would conde-

scend to desire any such thing? But such is the very miraculous change in his views. The loss of your money, although he is aware of it, has never been even alluded to. So you see that his motives have never been mercenary. For my part, Luke, I have not the pride and vanity to desire you to consume your days and destroy your health in quest of a mere name. I have no objections to the pursuit of business. * * * * * * Yet you must not understand me as pronouncing an unqualified condemnation of your books. If you write well, I should never object to your writing—only I hope, if you should be disposed to take up the pen in future, you will compose nothing but what may be calculated, at least designed, to instruct and benefit some portion of your fellow beings. * * * * * Now I must close this *audacious* effusion. You must act as your judgment will dictate on its reception.

BLANCHE."

When Joseph, and several of my acquaintances from the west, came to the hotel to look after me, they found me at the door, about to get into a hack.

"Where are you going, Luke?" asked Joseph.

"To Norfolk," said I.

"What for?"

"To be married!" said I, boldly. "And I want you, and all of you, to go with me."

"Pshaw!" said he. "I'm afraid you are mad, past recovery."

"But I am not, though. I must be off. Will you go with me?"

"Why," said he, "if you are really going to be married, I am under an obligation to accompany you. You may

perhaps, recollect that you went to my wedding." I did recollect it—the immersion and the toothache were indelible remembrancers.

"But," he continued, "you have not money enough to pay the parson, nor to pay your expenses thither, nor to buy a wedding suit. Miss Blanche, they say, has some little fortune; but would it not be indelicate to draw upon her purse *so soon?*"

This speech brought me to my senses. It was a sensible speech, and the plain truth. My entire wardrobe was on my person, and there were only one or two dollars in my pocket. So I gave up the trip for the present, and made preparations to set out the next day.

I soon overhauled my trunk full of dollars. They were black and rusty enough from the effects of their submersion. Only one hundred dollars had been claimed as a reward for fishing them up. After taking out a sufficient sum to answer my purposes, I had the rest deposited in the Philadelphia Bank, with a request for Mr. T., the cashier, to invest the balance for sixty days, at six per cent., taking good collateral security.

We arrived in safety at Norfolk, and I was again with Blanche. * * * * * * Our silly speeches and actions I will suppress, as matters too *personal* to be laid before the public.

The very next day, at sunrise, the wedding party was assembled before the chancel in the church, while the whole town seemed to be present as witnesses. Every pew below, and every seat in the galleries above, appeared to be occupied. My old counselor and friend, Mr. T., gave me away, while the terrible uncle officiated for Blanche. The minister, in his sacerdotal garments, advanced and solemnly performed the rites. * * * *

The moral of the past may be summed up in these simple words:

ADHERE STEADFASTLY TO YOUR BUSINESS.

LUKE SHORTFIELD.

P. S. Blanche adds another moral:

ADHERE STEADFASTLY TO YOUR FIRST LOVE.

The minister adds:

ADHERE STEADFASTLY TO THE CHURCH.

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